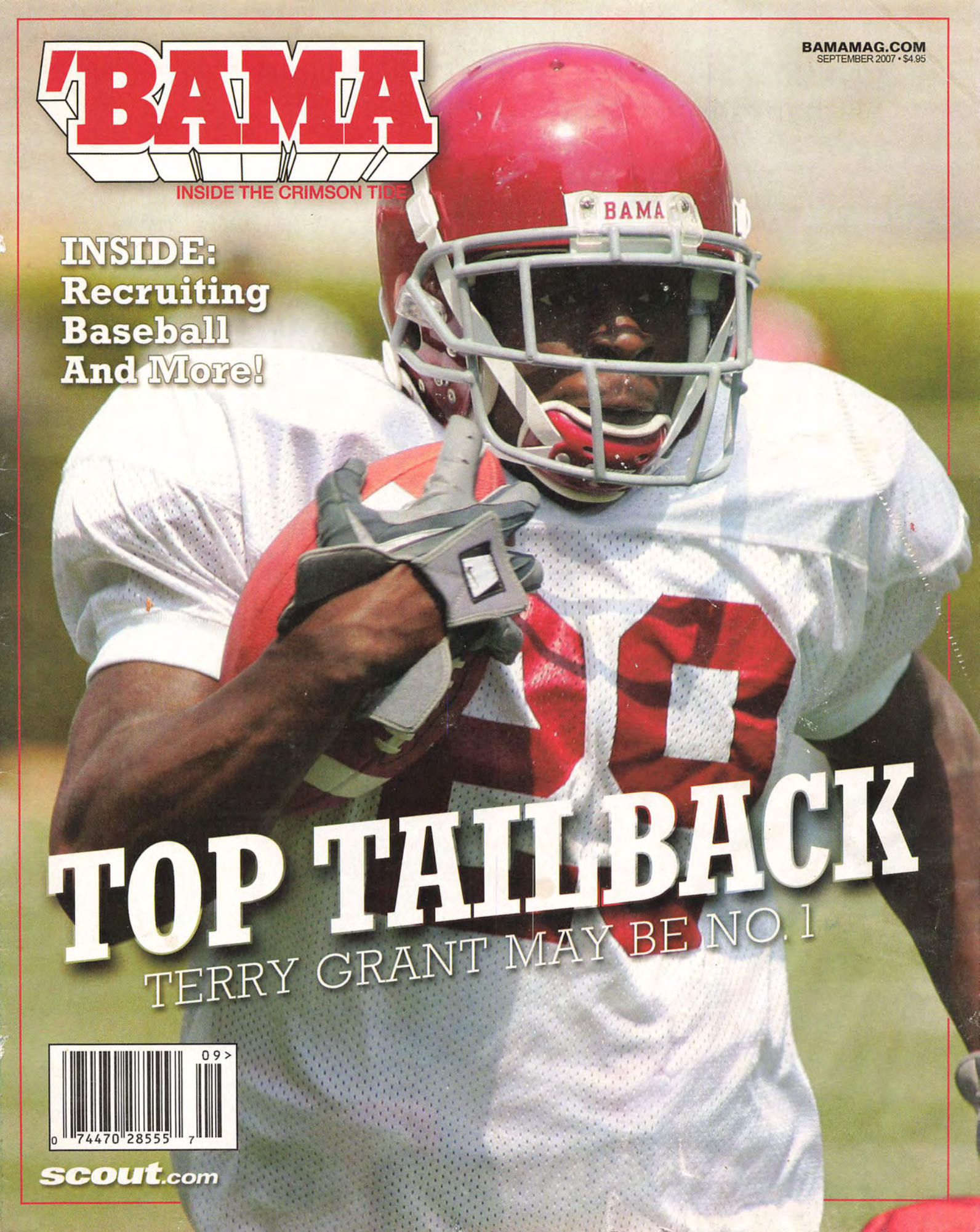

'BAMA
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE
BAMAMAG.COM
SEPTEMBER 2007 • $4.95
INSIDE:
Recruiting
Baseball
And More!
BAMA
TOP TAILBACK
TERRY GRANT MAY BE NO. 1
09>
0 74470 28555 7
scout.com

i laugh. i click. i capture. i print. i cherish. all thanks to one little card.

Whether it's a night out on the town or an afternoon at the pool, some moments just beg to be captured. So shoot away, but be sure that there's a SanDisk® memory card inside. It's secure, reliable, and just so happens to be the flash memory more people rely on than any other. And there's more to SanDisk than memory cards for your camera. You can play more of your favorite tunes on our 8GB Sansa® MP3 players or extend your cell phone's memory with our mobile cards. Get more out of your gaming device with a SanDisk gaming card, and for your brilliant ideas — Cruzer® USB flash drives. Because where you store your life should be as amazing as life itself.

WWW.SANDISK.COM PHOTOGRAPHY

MP3 PLAYERS

USB DRIVES

MOBILE

SanDisk®

STORE YOUR WORLD IN OURS®

SanDisk, the SanDisk logo, Store Your World In Ours, Sansa and Cruzer are trademarks of SanDisk Corporation, registered in the US and other countries. SD is a trademark. Other brand names mentioned herein are for identification purposes only and may be trademarks of their respective holder/s. © 2007 SanDisk Corporation. All rights reserved. 1 gigabyte (GB) = 1 billion bytes.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

Over the years we become accustomed to the speech habits of Alabama football coaches. We old-timers all know "Bingo! That's a goodie!" Paul Bryant exclaimed it frequently on Sundays as he narrated the playback of Crimson Tide football games. Bill Curry wanted "focus," Gene Stallings had his "druthers," "so to speak," as Mike Shula said.

Now we hear "It is what it is." (Not for this place, but wouldn't that drive Bill Clinton crazy?)

I hear Nick Saban saying "It is what it is," but I can't help but think that Saban is too much like Bryant to be satisfied with that. (Before I go any further, let me state emphatically that I don't consider Nick Saban in the same league with Paul Bryant. Not yet.)

Yes, "It is what it is." But that doesn't mean it can't be changed.

Saban speaks of patience, pointing out how terribly long it took him to build LSU into a national championship team (four years; the same as Bryant when he came to Alabama in 1958). Saban thinks there is too much talk of championships, and for that he can blame Bryant, who frequently talked about the goal of winning the national championship. And delivered.

A coach can't be blamed for insinuating that he doesn't have the talent to win a championship, and followers of the team should respect that professional opinion. Still, when Crimson Tide fans see their players competing with the very best teams, only to come up short week after week, the conclusion of the fans is the same as that of Athletics Director Mal Moore: that the change needed is in coaching.

Any coach is better with good players, and it is the responsibility of the coach to attract those players. No one doubts that Saban and his staff will get the recruiting job done.

Meanwhile, the expectation of fans will be higher than Saban might wish. Part of it is the money. Bryant came to Alabama at the princely sum of $15,000 a year and challenged those who didn't like the way he did things to buy out his 10-year contract. By the time Bryant had won six national championships, he had worked his way up to a salary in excess of $100,000.

The story is told of The University president going to Bryant at the end of one of his successful seasons and informing the coach that he would be getting a raise. "Aw, I don't need a raise," Bryant is reported to have replied. "Maybe you don't," said the president, "but I do, and we can't have the president of The University making more than the football coach."

A year of Bryant in today's market gets just a couple of weeks of Saban, but the principle is the same. Alabama wants the best possible coach and is willing to pay top dollar to have him. With that comes great expectation. Tide fans didn't pay much attention when Dennis Franchione said, "Lord, give me patience, and give it to me now."

If the chairman of The University's journalism department was paid $4 million a year and the professors all paid hundreds of thousands, readers of the Crimson White would expect a Pulitzer. And the Alabama passion for football exceeds that for journalism.

It is what it is.

Sincerely,

Kirk McNair
Editor

Vol. 30, Issue 1 (ISSN 0195-0975 USPS 489-470) September, 2007
'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE magazine is published monthly, 10 times a year (September-June) by Scout Publishing, LLC 2003 Western Ave, Suite 700, Seattle, WA 98121. Basic subscription rate is $44.95. Single copy price is $4.95. SUBSCRIBERS: If the post office alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligations unless we receive a corrected address. POSTMASTER: Please send all change of address forms to: 'Bama, Inside the Crimson Tide 1916 Pike Place, Suite 12-250, Seattle, WA 98101-1097. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA and additional mailing offices. Please allow three weeks for change of address. Reproduction or use, in whole or in part, of editorial or graphic content in any manner is strictly prohibited without the prior express written permission of Scout Publishing. All letters to 'BAMA magazine will be treated as intended for publication and are subject to 'BAMA magazine's unrestricted right to edit. Publisher is not responsible for any unsolicited art, photographs or manuscripts. 'BAMA magazine is an independent source of news and features relating to Alabama athletic programs. Scout Publishing, 'BAMA magazine and their officers, directors and stockholders are not authorized, sponsored or sanctioned by any university, athletic conference, or athletic governing body or any of their agencies. © 2007 Scout Publishing, LLC and 'BAMA, INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE magazine. All rights reserved.

'BAMA
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

Scout Publishing, Llc.

SVP/GM
Patrick Crumb

VP, Engineering & Operations
Bill Sornsin

VP, Advertising & Operations
Joe Robinson

General Manager
Alan McDonald

Manager Print & Local Ad Sales
Eddie Pauline

Director of Online Marketing & Network Development
Joel Cox

Director of Online Programming
Scott Kennedy

Director of Network Operations & Events
Stephan Miller

Print Subscription Marketing & Network Development
Dave Stirt

Network Coordinator
Anessa Connell

Photography
Getty Images

Recruiting Editors
Jamie Newberg, Dave Telep

Creative Director
Jay Torrell

Production Manager
Shannon Kalow

Designer
Breanne Miller

'Bama, Inside The Crimson Tide

Editor
Kirk McNair

Assistant Editor
Mitch Dobbs

Recruiting Reporter
Andrew Bone

Feature Reporters
Erik Stinnett
Thomas Murphy
Peter Edmund
Corey Hoodjer
Arnold P. Steadham

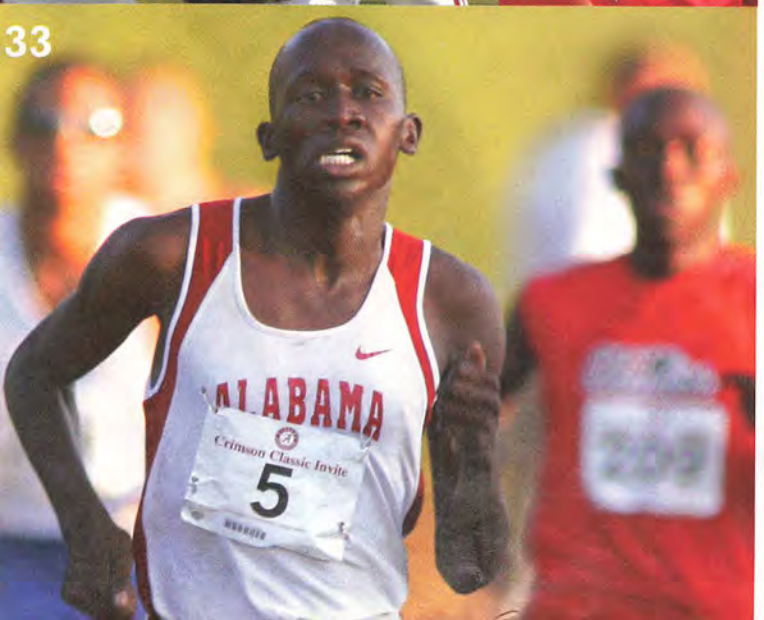
Photos
Kent Gidley
Barry Fikes
Benjamin Cohen
Butch Dill
Stuart McNair
Cory Johnson
Jessica Smith

Assistant To Editor
Vera Dowdle

Subscriptions: Order online at bamamag.com (reduced online rate $39.95) or call 888-979-0979.

Customer Service: Call 888-979-0979

To Advertise in 'Bama, inside the crimson tide: Contact Dwight Johnson at Dwight@Scout.com OR Mitch Green at 1-800-239-9090.



'BAMA
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

September 2007

Volume 30 • Issue One

Features

5 **Nothing For Granted**
Redshirt freshman Terry Grant could be top tailback
by Mitch Dobbs

8 **Man With A Plan**
Mustin took chance with transfer to Alabama
by Kirk McNair

11 **Dream On**
Rashad Johnson was determined to be Tider
by Thomas Murphy

14 **Catching Up**
Notes on the state of Crimson Tide football
by Kirk McNair

16 **Banking on Huge Return**
New NCAA rule promises more excitement
by Jeff Elliott

22 **The Next Level**
Tiders have opportunities in pro football, basketball, baseball by Kirk McNair

24 **Flip Flop**
Jim Wells' resignation and return raise questions
by Mitch Dobbs

27 **The Real Deals**
There has been some turnover in athletics department
by Kirk McNair

29 **Optimistic**
Talented volleyball team has high expectations
by Kirk McNair

31 **Help On The Way**
Newcomers figure prominently in 2007 soccer
by Mitch Dobbs

33 **Different Routes To Same Goal**
Cross country teams have talent by Andrew Varble II

36 **Prep Prospects**
A look at the big men in the state of Alabama
by Andrew Bone

40 **Where Are They Now?**
At 81, Harry Gilmer still raising eyebrows by Erik Stinnett

45 **The Other Guys**
Football isn't the only sport busy adding athletes
by Kirk McNair

Departments

3 **Letter from the Editor**
35 **Fall Sports Rosters**
39 **Football Hot List**
42 **'BAMA Scorecard**
46 **Fall Sports Schedules**

***Cover photo of Terry Grant by Kent Gidley**
***Centerspread photo of Jim Wells by Mitch Dobbs**

Nothing For Granted

Redshirt freshman Terry Grant could be top Tailback

Terry Grant

Alabama's scrimmage at Bryant-Denny Stadium on August 14, 2006 could have been a football fluke. True freshman Terry Grant, standing 5-9 and weighing 185 pounds, no higher than fifth on the running back depth chart, had breakaway touchdown runs of 50 and 46 yards (one against first-team defenders) and finished the day with 148 yards on 13 carries including a third touchdown run of six yards.

"It was a day I'd been waiting on," Grant said. "I wanted people to know my name--know who I was. I got out there and prepared myself and did my best. It was a good outcome. I remember (senior Alabama defensive end) Wallace Gilberry used to ask me, 'Why did we recruit you? You don't look like you're that good.' After the first scrimmage he said, 'Now I see why."

The day was impressive, but one scrimmage doesn't make a football player. And Grant was the first to recognize that fact.

"You never can go by what you do in one scrimmage, because that can change and it can be something else at the next one," he said. "That was an exciting feeling. You get out there and practice with those guys and they're much bigger than you."

To this day it stands as the highlight of Terry Grant's career at The University of Alabama, but that could soon change. Thanks to good health, a steady determination, and a spring training that caught Coach Nick Saban's eye, this smallish running back from a 2A school in small-town Mississippi is on the verge of locking down a big role in the Crimson Tide offense for the coming season.

At the conclusion of spring practice Saban indicated that Grant was the only tailback who had shown him the "consistency that we need." He compared Grant, who is still 5-9 and now weighs 189 pounds, to Domanick Davis, who starred for LSU and has been with the Houston Texans for four years.

"We're still looking for a tandem at running back to get someone else who has consistency that we need," Saban said. "Terry would be a great guy. We had LaBrandon Toefield and Domanick Davis (at LSU). He'd be the Domanick Davis and then have a bigger stronger guy that would be a nice change of pace, and give us the ability to feature both those guys in different ways."

Was it an indication that Grant now

Terry Grant caught the eye of Nick Saban in the spring.

Stuart McNair

sits atop the tailback depth chart, with Jimmy Johns, Glenn Coffee, Roy Upchurch and any newcomers all behind him? Grant says no.

"I'm coming back in and starting over like it's spring again, trying to prove myself all over again," he said. "We never really discussed me being the starter or anything like that. I'm still not real sure how it's going to be so I'm just kind of going along and working hard, not really worried about it."

Saban made the Grant comparison to Davis in his post A-Day press conference, but he never mentioned anything of it to Grant.

"I really didn't hear it," Mississippi's Mr. Football in 2005 said. "One of my coaches back home called me and told me he compared me to that guy; so that's a good comparison. I don't mind. I'm just a young back trying to establish myself and trying to play. Whoever he compares me to, that's great.

"I know who Domanick Davis is. Domanick Davis is a good back."

Taking nothing for granted in life or football is just one of the characteristics of maturity for the youngest of 13 brothers and sisters. He knew from a young age that he wanted to leave Lumberton, Mississippi, and go off to college.

"You see it all the time in our little town how people only go so far," he said. "You see what happens and you know in your mind 'I don't want to be one of them. I want to be the one that makes it and keeps going, improving in life.'"

Athletics was a means to do just that, as Grant had seen first hand. Grant's brother Lester Williams played for Miami in college (ironically under Lou Saban, Nick Saban's cousin, and later under former Alabama Assistant Howard Schnellenberger) and went on to play for the New England Patriots. Williams played in Super Bowl XXXI in New Orleans against the Green Bay Packers.

"I'm not sure where he gets his talent from because he's on my dad's side," Grant said. "There's a bunch of talent on mom's side and I think he was the only one that ever played sports on my dad's side. On my mom's side everyone was in sports but not that many to carry it on to college. I'm probably the second one to go on to college and try to play sports and finish it out."

Grant didn't want Lumberton to be a life-long place of residence, and Southern Miss, which was less than 30 miles away in Hattiesburg, was too close for comfort when college selection time arrived.

"It's a nice place. Small town. Everyone knows you," he said of Lumberton. "It can also be your worst enemy at times--people knowing everything about you. It's a good little place to go and just hang out with friends."

Florida State also offered Grant a football scholarship and was one of the final schools left on Grant's list the day before signing day 2006, but Tuscaloosa's proximity was just right.

"It was nice at USM, but it was just too close to home and I just wanted to be away and be on my own," he said. "(Alabama) wasn't too far away from home and it wasn't too close. It was kind of like the perfect place to be."

Football came naturally to Grant as a youngster. He started at outside linebacker as an eighth grader, at times walking up to a defensive end spot for 2A Lumberton.

"Athletics always came easy for him," Lumberton Football Coach Teddy Dyess said.

In addition to being a football star, Grant also played baseball and ran track in high school. He wasn't your average jock, however. Grant was a member of the National Honor Society and graduated from Lumberton with honors. Grant plans to major in criminal justice at Alabama.

"That's one most impressive things about him," Dyess said. "Academics did not come easy for him, but he set a goal for himself to separate himself. He busted his butt as far as tutoring and staying after school. He went over and above. He's got an old man mentality to a certain extent. He's very mature for his age. He knows what he wants to accomplish."

Grant's manner exudes this maturity. Asked where it comes from he gave a matter-of-fact answer.

"I guess I would say family problems back home," he said. "You go through something and you've got to mature a lot faster than other people. I think it carried over to where I am now."

Grant's father, Joseph Williams, died when Grant was in high school. His mother lived in Florida, so Grant stayed with his sister Michelle and spent a lot of time at his high school coach's home.

"To this day my four-year-old son calls Terry his big brother," Dyess said. "Between his eighth and ninth grade years he had to

have surgery and he was there from six in the morning to six at night and the only two people there were me and my wife."

Before Grant committed to Alabama, he had a talk about football with his defensive coach at Lumberton, John Brown, about whether or not he could be competitive in the Southeastern Conference.

"I think we were maybe out to eat one night and I guess he figured out I had something on my mind I wanted to ask him," Grant recalled. "I asked him the question and he said, 'You shouldn't be comparing yourself to them or nobody else. Just go out there and play the game like you know how to play it and it's going to come to you.'"

Dyess also knew Grant was a special talent.

"There was never a doubt in my mind he could play at any level he wanted," Dyess said. "It was obvious he was going be special."

Grant also took perspective from his position coach from the previous staff, Sparky Woods.

"Coach Woods always told me the tough survive in this world and you've got to be one of them tough ones that stick it out even when times are hard," Grant said. "I've heard a lot of people say they take all the fun out of football in college. You've got to make it fun. It's not supposed to be easy."

Grant was still recovering from shoulder surgery he had on September 21 when Mike Shula was fired, and Saban hired. And even though he was probably the least likely player on the squad to be fazed by the turmoil, he found some personal luck in the transition in Burton Burns, Alabama's new running backs coach.

"Coach Burns recruited me at Clemson," Grant said. "He's a real good guy. He's funny. He makes it fun and you're always in the spirit to play football around that guy. He's real big on the little things and that's what it takes."

Grant was completely healed from the shoulder surgery in the spring. The injury was actually an old high school injury that he never got checked out. He re-injured the shoulder during a kickoff return against Vanderbilt. Grant qualified for a medical redshirt.

Last year he had two carries for 22 yards, and even though he was back on every kickoff return for the first three games, he never got his shot at a return. Most of the kicks went to fellow freshman Javier Arenas.

Grant's obviously a speed back, and Alabama Offensive Coordinator Major Applewhite's offense will try to feature that with Grant. Grant also has good hands and should get a chance to show them in the fall. Like most college backs, Grant was exclusively a ball-carrier--not a blocker--in high school.

"Blocking I've got to get better at," he said. "It's one of my weak points right now but it's guaranteed I'm going to get better because I'm willing. It's just the technique of getting it down because I never had to do it in high school."

Grant marvels at the change he's seen in himself and his teammates since Saban's arrival.

"We're a different team now than we were then," he said. "It was tough. He's a tough coach but he's a good one. We all respect him and we all know what he's trying to do. We all want to accomplish it, too. Everybody had to prove to be the best to get that position so it was kind of a good deal for everybody to show themselves, even in the classroom, to show that you can do better and get your grades."

Grant still goes back to Lumberton, if only to fish with his uncle and cousins. He caught a six pound bass in a pond there a week before his interview with 'BAMA Magazine.

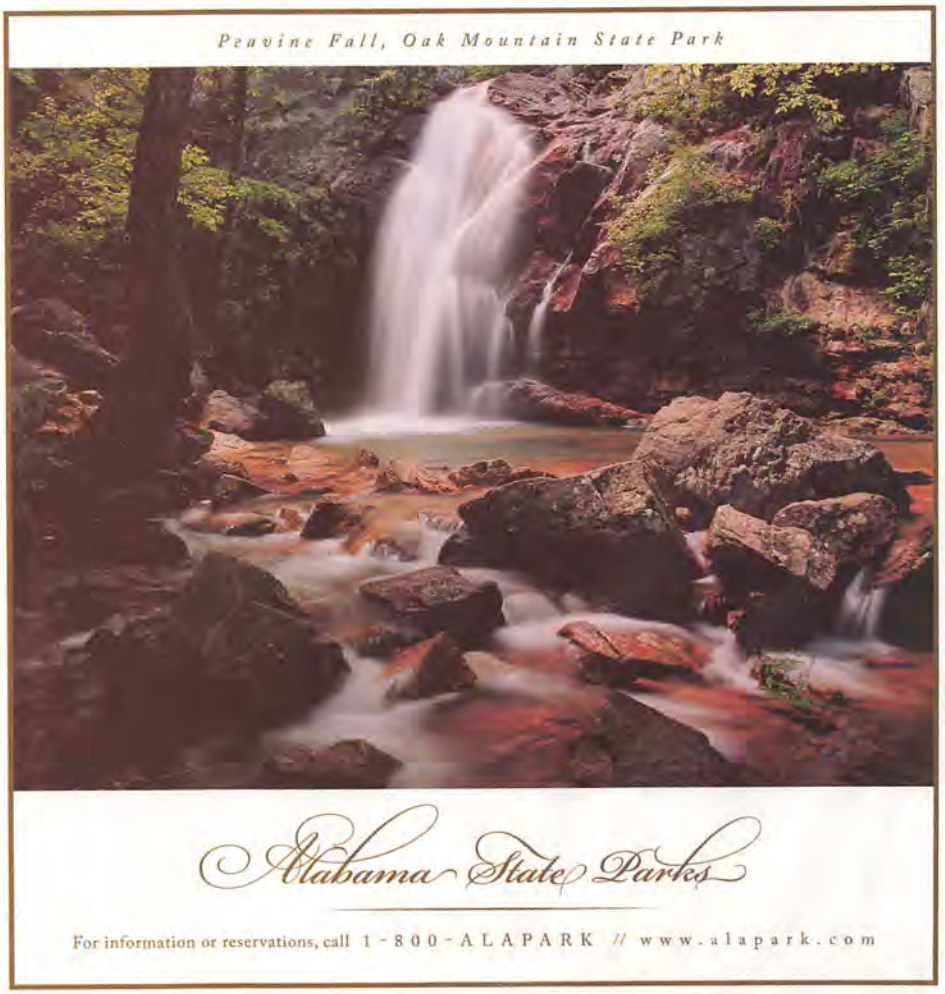
"When I go I just kind of relax and hang out and go fishing," he said. "It clears your mind."

His high school coach has recently moved on to another job at Philadelphia High School.

"I called him said there's some kids in Lumberton that are going to be hurt," Dyess said, "and asked him to go by there and talk to them. It's almost like he had fear of us leaving Lumberton, but I told him we'd be even closer to him in Tuscaloosa."

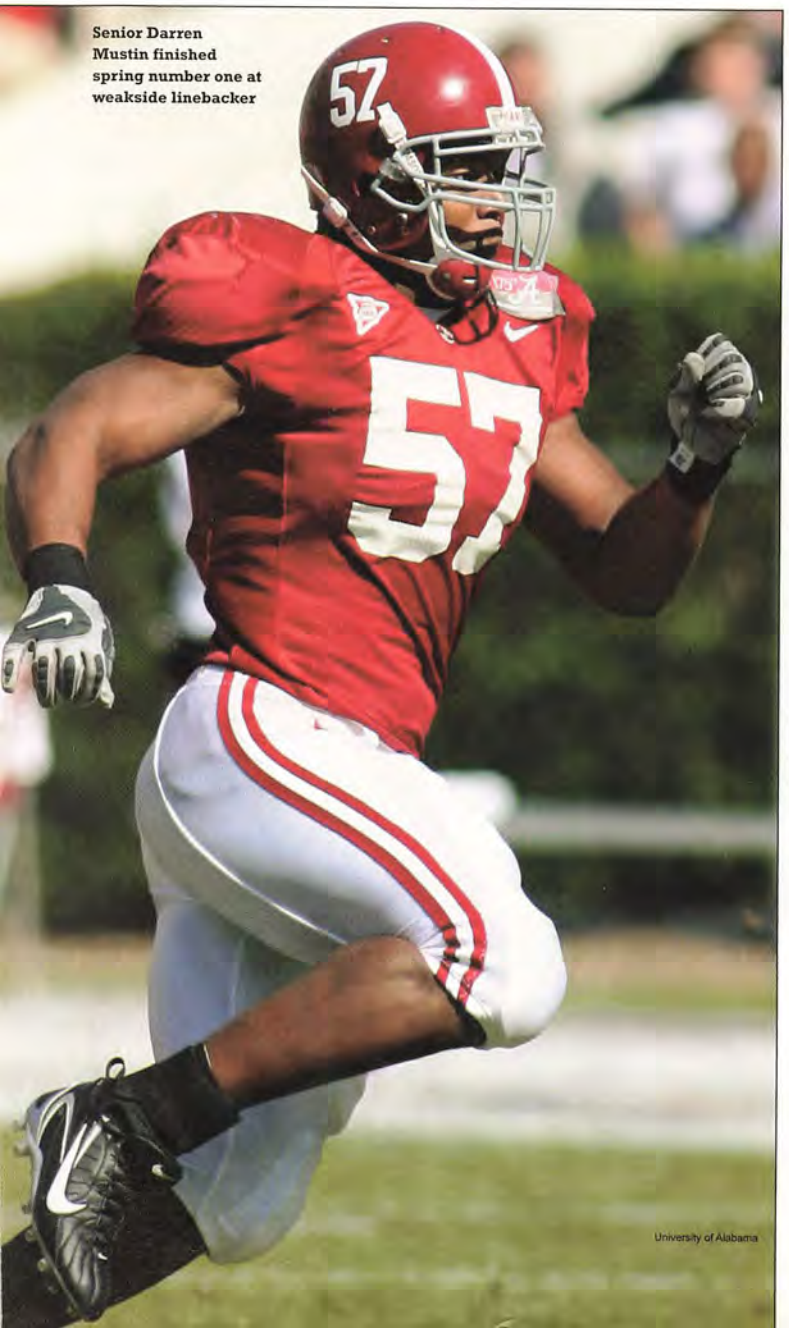
Alabama's crowd in attendance for the A-Day game was over 40 times that of the population of Lumberton, which according to the 2000 census was 2,228. Grant was excited and impressed by the crowd, but like everything else in his life he was quick to put it into perspective.

"That was great for everybody," he said. "If 92,000 are watching you at A-Day you can only imagine what it's going to be like at a real game. If you are not one of the people that can actually do it on your own, then it doesn't mean anything to you. If you can go in the gym and do it without someone having to make you do it, that's when you get better." ■


Peavine Fall, Oak Mountain State Park
Alabama State Parks
For information or reservations, call 1-800-ALAPARK // www.alapark.com

MAN With A Plan

Mustin took chance with transfer to Alabama



Senior Darren Mustin finished spring number one at weakside linebacker

University of Alabama

In 2003 an Alabama football coaching change might have cost Darren Mustin a chance to be an Alabama football player. In 2007 following another Crimson Tide football coaching change, Mustin has a good chance to be a starting Bama linebacker. Mustin took a chance on his future when he transferred to The Capstone.

Mustin finished spring practice as the number one weakside linebacker, one of two inside linebacker positions in Alabama's 3-4 defense. The 6-1 1/2, 235-pound senior doesn't have much playing experience, but he has great determination.

Mustin was a star performer for Coach Carlton Flatt at Brentwood Academy in Tennessee. He was a fullback and tight end on offense, but was most effective as a linebacker. Even though he was all-state as a junior and senior, he said he was "not highly-recruited. Alabama looked at me, but it was during one of those crazy coaching changes (Dennis Franchione bolting for Texas A&M and Mike Price replacing him after the Rose Bowl)."

As a prep senior he had over 100 tackles his senior season and also had five interceptions. In the Clinic Bowl he had 17 tackles and three sacks to win the game's Defensive MVP Award. He also played basketball and ran track.

He also drew a little interest from Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt. But eventually he took a scholarship offer from Middle Tennessee State University. He played briefly in 11 games as a freshman for the Blue Raiders in 2003. The outside linebacker got more playing time, but in only eight games in his sophomore season. And then he decided to transfer to Alabama.

Mustin didn't leave MTSU because he was unhappy under Coach Andy McCollum. "I don't want to down-play MTSU at all," Mustin said. "It is a great school. I just didn't want to go my whole career knowing I could never be on a team with a chance to win the national championship. Everyone wants to play for a powerhouse SEC team."

Mustin talked to his position coach, Bradley Peveto, who is now at LSU. "He's a great guy," Mustin said. "He understood where I was coming from. He wished me the best of luck and told me to have a plan, and I have."

When he decided to transfer, Mustin knew one student at Alabama, former Tide running back Theo Townsend. "He's gone

now, but he introduced me to a lot of people who will be lifelong friends," Mustin said. "I had a lot of support from friends and family when I decided to transfer."

Having support from his family is a lot of support. "I'm the second oldest of 13 children," Mustin said. "My older sister and I are biological children and my parents adopted 11 other children, including five each from two families. It was never boring around our house."

Now his home is in Alabama and he said, "I love it here. I hang around with my teammates a lot, but I also have a lot of friends who aren't football players.

"When I meet prospects I can tell them about what it's like to be at Alabama from the perspective of someone who has been somewhere else, too."

Mustin barely avoided playing against MTSU. Alabama hosted the Blue Raiders in 2002 when Mustin was a high school senior and the Crimson Tide played MTSU again in 2005 when Mustin was a member of the Bama scout team while sitting out his transfer year.

Mustin said, "I had a little problem with the transfer. When I got here, they told me they didn't have any more slots, that I would have to wait a year before coming in. But then they worked it out and I walked on. Randy Ross worked me through the process."

Mustin had a plan for his transfer year in 2005. He said, "I was a linebacker on the scout team. I was trying to make our team better and I was trying to get better. I watched DeMeco Ryans a lot, and I watched Freddie Roach."

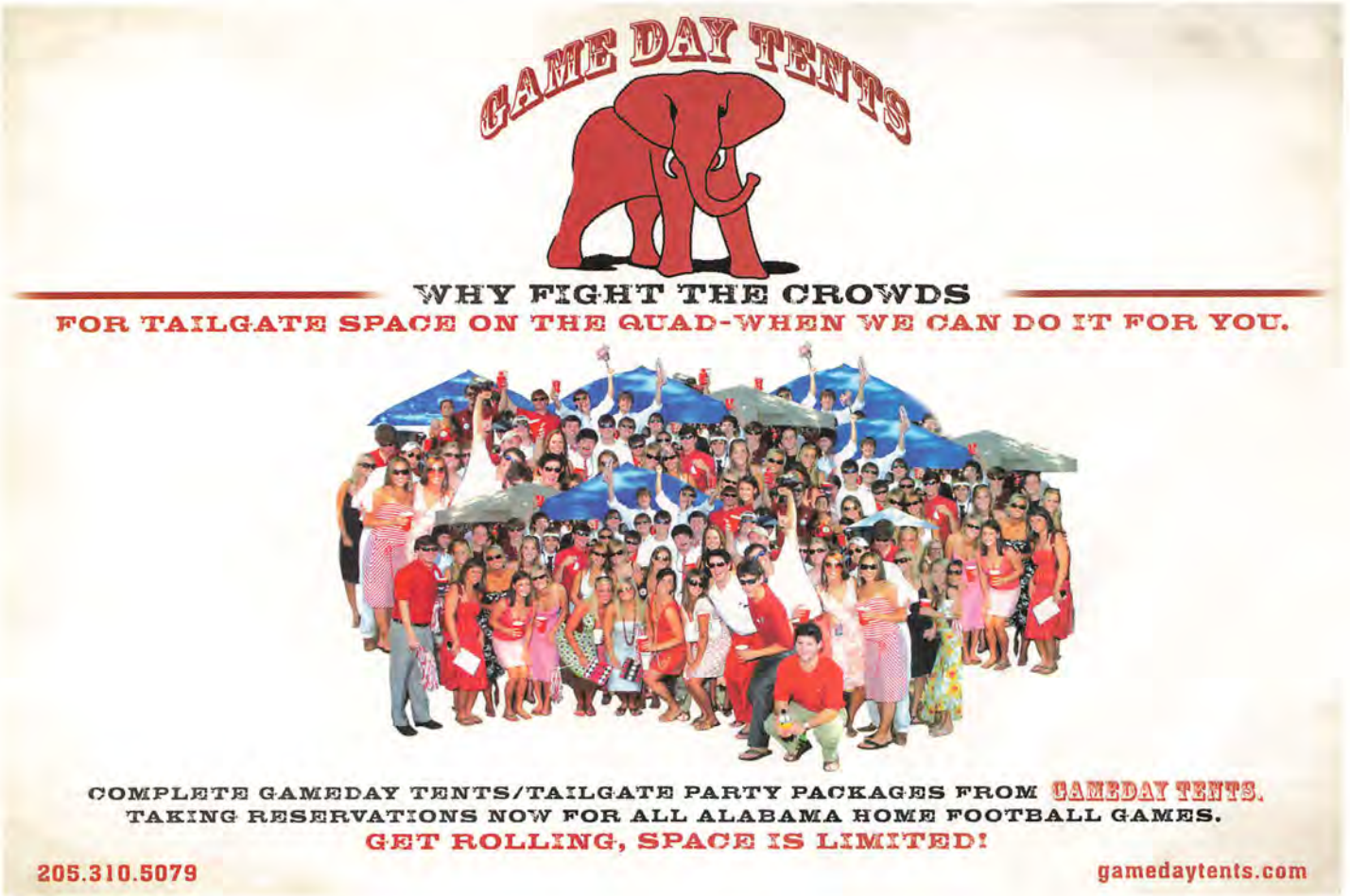
As a transfer, Mustin couldn't go on the field for games. Alabama opened that 2005 season against his old team, MTSU, and Bama was a 26-7 winner. But it's not the game so much that Mustin remembers.

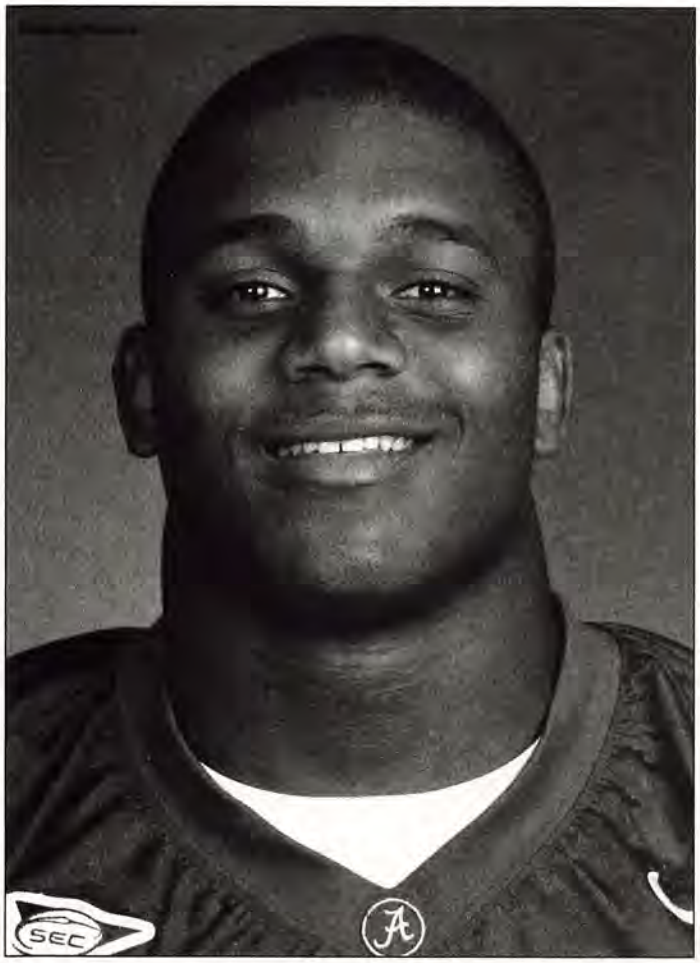
"I was sitting in the student section, which meant getting to the game early," he said. "The people just kept coming and they were crazy for Alabama football. I said to myself, 'There's no place on the planet like this.' And then last A-Day. Where else would 92,000 people come to watch some guys practice, which is all the spring game is? I guessed maybe 75,000. Boy, was I wrong. We couldn't believe it when the place just kept filling up. Does it make the players feel good to have that kind of support? Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! Oh, yeah! The great Alabama fan support makes a big difference."

Mustin had always been an outside linebacker, but became an inside linebacker at Alabama. He likes the inside position. "I was 205 out of high school and at least 240, maybe 245 when I transferred to Alabama," he said. "I got down to probably under 230 last winter. I've gotten stronger and have more endurance. On a good day I might run a 4.6 40. Probably 4.7."

In 2006 he got his first playing time for the Crimson Tide. It wasn't much, a total of 73 plays in 10 games. But it was enough to earn his letter.

"I played mostly on special teams," he said. "I was on the punt block team and the kickoff coverage team. I played a little linebacker. Coach Kines (former Defensive Coordinator and Linebackers Coach Joe Kines) told me he was going to play me


GAME DAY TENTS
WHY FIGHT THE CROWDS
FOR TAILGATE SPACE ON THE QUAD-WHEN WE CAN DO IT FOR YOU.
COMPLETE GAMEDAY TENTS/TAILGATE PARTY PACKAGES FROM GAMEDAY TENTS.
TAKING RESERVATIONS NOW FOR ALL ALABAMA HOME FOOTBALL GAMES.
GET ROLLING, SPACE IS LIMITED!
205.310.5079
gamedaytents.com



against Duke, and he did. He put me in when we were losing, which made me feel he had confidence in me. And then I made a third down tackle, which made me feel I had done my job."

He had four tackles against Duke, half his season total. He made one tackle each against Ole Miss, Tennessee, Florida International, and Mississippi State.

At the end of the 2006 season it was announced that Mike Shula would not return as Alabama's head football coach. "It was a shock, but not a surprise," Mustin said. "I didn't know who the new coach would be, but all the players were following the news real closely. We were real excited when we learned it would be Nick Saban.

"I didn't know what to expect, but I thought it would mean a clean slate for everyone. Then he got here. I like how he works and how he works us. It was good from our first meeting."

Mustin said he met his position coach, Kevin Steele, accidentally before the start of spring practice. "I had been in the weightroom working out when they had a fire drill in the building," Mustin said. "I was walking out and started walking with this new coach. It was Coach Steele."

Mustin likes the defense. "There are two inside linebackers in our scheme, Mike and Will," he said. "I'm Will (weakside). The outside linebackers are Sam (strongside) and Jack (the hybrid position that sometimes moves to defensive end). Last year we had Prince Hall, Matt Collins and me at Mike (middle linebacker). Prince is still at Mike, but I've moved to Will and Matt has moved to D-Line.

"Right now I'm the guy at Will, but nothing is given to you and you have to keep working. Eryk Anders and Marcel Stamps are working there. And some of the freshmen look good, so they could be in the mix. Rolando McClain, Jennings Hester, Chavis Williams. They are all working hard.

"We're all working to get better. We don't give the rookies a hard time. We remember what it was like. It's tough being away from home for the first time."

In his first 15 practices under Saban, Mustin said, "I had a good spring, but not a great spring. I was surprised at the amount of running we did. You had to take a lot of fluids.

"I think I improved, but there are a lot of areas where I can get better."

He said the mental is more difficult than the physical, even though the physical is demanding.

"The conditioning work we do gets us ready for the physical part of practice," he said.

Mustin likes the strength and conditioning aspect of football. "I love working in the weight room," he said. "Everyone here wants to go to the NFL, but if that doesn't work out for me I'd like to be a strength coach. Maybe a personal trainer. It would be great to be a strength coach for a football team."

He said, "The mental part is the tough part. It's not just 'Snap, go get the ball!' It's very tough. Our playbook is thick. It's not impossible, but it's difficult. We put in the basics and then build on it every day. If you got the whole book to begin with, it would really be tough, but we build on it and it becomes second nature.

"Recognition, assignment, and getting stronger and more durable are my goals. I learned in the spring I need to step up and be a leader. I'm a senior. This is it for me. The coaches tell the seniors, 'This is your team.' That clicked with me.

"I'm learning the system so it's second nature with me, like breathing. That means knowing more than just my assignments. I need to know what every position does."

Mustin has had heard the predictions that Alabama will be good on offense, but that two straight years of big losses on defense means the Tide may have trouble on the defensive side. "We take that as a challenge," he said. "We're working to come together as a unit. We know if we play as one and play all out, we'll be successful. And we ask ourselves every day: 'Are we getting better, or are we just surviving?'"

Just like in the season, the players took it one game at a time in the summer. Mustin explained, "The first week of summer we get together and say, 'Okay, we're getting ready for Western Carolina.' The second week we work like we're getting ready for Vanderbilt. Then Arkansas and then Georgia and on down the line, just like we would in the season. We don't overlook anyone. Just like in war, you can't underestimate your opponent."

In the early summer the players had a routine of lifting and running on Monday and running and seven-on-seven pass skeleton work on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Wednesdays were special with players participating in a karate class.

"It makes you more flexible and helps with your balance," Mustin said. "Plus, who wouldn't want to know how to throw a great punch or a kick? I had never done it. I like it. I didn't think I'd break a sweat, but you'd be surprised at how much work it is." ■

Dream On

Rashad Johnson was determined to be Tider

It was the fall of 2004 and Rashad Johnson's dream of playing football at The University of Alabama seemed a miracle away.

Johnson was a standout running back and fill-in quarterback with good speed at Sulligent High School, but he had a series of issues bigger than the Chicago Bears' defensive front blocking the path to his goals.

He had a few games that season with an ankle injury so his statistics--fewer than 1,000 rushing yards after a 1,300-yard season as a junior--weren't jaw droppers. Sulligent High was on its third head coach in three seasons, meaning those all-critical connections to college staffs weren't there.

``I was a guy in high school without any offers to any big-time schools,'' Johnson said.

Johnson, at roughly 5-11, 175 pounds, didn't have a buzz connected to his recruitment.

For instance, he was not mentioned on Scout.com's list of prospects in the state that year.

Johnson received scholarship offers from West Alabama, North Alabama and The Citadel.

But he dared to dream bigger.

He was determined to play in front of 90,000 fans at Alabama.

``I always loved football, and when you're young and you live in the state of Alabama, of course you want to come to Alabama,'' Johnson said.

``It's just the best place to be if you want to go on to the next level. Alabama's name just carries a long way.''

Johnson didn't have blue-chip status for Alabama to roll out the red carpet. But he did have a big heart, a can-do attitude, and parents--Gloria and Randy Johnson--who were completely supportive.

``When you've got a child you try to help build his dreams,'' said Gloria. ``If he had gone somewhere else he could have been a starter a lot sooner, but would he have been satisfied?''

The answer was no.

So his parents made the sacrifices to pay for their son's way through two years at The University, a redshirt season and his freshman year.

Johnson made headway as a game scout teamer his redshirt season, though he occasionally wondered if he had made the right choice and if he'd ever get to play meaningful downs in the Southeastern Conference.

``That was definitely a question that came up,'' Johnson said. ``Would I ever get to play?

``I could have gone to this other school and school would be paid for and my folks would have a lot easier time. But my dad was like, `If this is really what you want to do, we can do this for you.'''

Said Randy Johnson: ``That was the stance we took. We'd get him through the first couple of years. It was a sacrifice, but he wanted to play Division I ball and he'd always been an Alabama fan.''

Johnson's scout-team performances impressed the Mike Shula coaching staff, and the following season he earned special teams starting assignments for the 10-2 Alabama team that opened the season 9-0.

As that 2005 team began practicing for the Cotton Bowl, the Tide coaches huddled up and determined Johnson could be an impact player much sooner in the defensive backfield than as an offensive back.

``They had recruited so many running backs and the depth chart was getting so deep,'' Johnson said. ``They saw the openings. We had (safeties) Charlie (Peprah) and Roman (Harper) both graduating and there were two open positions on defense.

``They looked at me and made the offer to me and I thought about it. I thought this may be a good idea because I did play defense in high school.''

Johnson practiced at safety through Cotton Bowl preparations.

Chris Ball, the Tide defensive backs coach at the time, was a big Johnson fan.

``He's got a big, big heart,'' Ball said last season. ``He only knows one speed, and he's a tremendous young man.''

Then-Alabama Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines was equally impressed by Johnson's attitude, skills, and demeanor.

``Every day is Christmas to that youngster,'' Kines said last fall. ``He's bright-eyed and he never lets anything get him down. He works hard every day.''

Johnson's hard work began reaping tangible dividends along the way. He earned the Bear Bryant Best Non-Scholarship Player award in the spring after his freshman season.

Last August, Tide coaches bestowed a scholarship on Johnson, who celebrated with his parents.

``Relieved, rejoiced, and just thanked God that things worked out,'' Gloria Johnson said. ``They saw how hard he worked.''

Johnson pulled down a start in Alabama's nickel package in the 2006 season-opener against Hawaii. He also started three other games and racked up 33 tackles and a team-high tying two forced fumbles.

Three years into his college career and the feisty Johnson had done the improbable: started as a walk-on freshman on special teams, switched positions and played well enough to be an impact player on defense.

``It didn't surprise me,'' Randy Johnson said. ``I've been a big football fan all my life and I have a little idea of what it takes to become a player.

``Seeing him grow up and use his athleticism, I knew he just needed an opportunity to showcase it. He and I talked about just going (to Alabama) with the thought `I'm as good as anybody there athletically.'''

Last spring Johnson won another award, the Bobby Johns Most Improved Defensive Back honor.

Johnson has two more years as a scholarship guy to make his mark on an Alabama team considered on the rise with new coach Nick Saban.

``I believe it's going to be his very best years,'' Gloria Johnson said.

``We all have to understand and realize exactly where we are,'' Rashad Johnson said. ``We can't think we're better than what we really are.''

Before the start of fall camp, Johnson said, ``The focus during the summer workouts is not to get through with the workouts; it's to push yourself to get better during the workout.

``We had a lot of times where guys were just going out there to make their times. We're running 110s, just make your time, you'll be all right. But the focus now is do better than what you think you can do. Push yourself to the limit. So we're trying to come in in August and be in the best physical condition we can be in.''

Johnson's time on the offensive scout team came during a heyday of Alabama defensive football. He counts linebackers DeMeco Ryans and Freddie Roach as two of the hardest-hitting guys he ever came across.

``Those are the guys you didn't want to meet in the hole,'' Johnson said. ``If you meet them, you want to meet them outside where you can give them a little head fake and try to get around them.''

Ryans and Roach were two of the top hitters, but a defensive lineman gave Johnson his hardest individual shot while he served on the scout team.

``I'd have to say the hardest I got hit was by Jeremy Clark one day,'' Johnson said. ``We were doing some scout team work, I got a hand-off and he just came up through the line and buried me pretty much. I didn't even see him coming.''

Johnson's favorite individual play of the 2006 season involved some crystal ball gazing with a fellow defensive back.

``The Vanderbilt game I was over on the sideline, me and Simeon (Castille) and a couple of guys sitting on the bench,'' Johnson recalled. ``We had just scored, so the kickoff was coming up and I think (Alabama) had just tied the game 10-10.

``I told Simeon, I was like, I'm fixing to go out here and cause a fumble, man. He was like, man, whatever. I was like, I promise you man, I'm fixing to do it.''

Vandy's Alex Washington took the return at the Commodores' 11-yard line, weaved 12 yards and came across Johnson, who, true to his word, stripped the ball away. The Tide's Cory Reamer recovered the fumble.

``That was probably one of my most exciting plays,'' Johnson said.

There was also the flip side to making a big play.

Johnson and cornerback Ramzee Robinson tried in vain to break up a pass in double overtime at Arkansas that somehow went from Razorback quarterback Mitch Mustain to his high school teammate, Ben Cleveland, for a touchdown.

``Actually me and Ramzee, we're still good friends, and we were talking about that (play) the other day,'' Johnson said. ``The guy went out in motion and (Robinson) was supposed to bump out with him.

``Everybody was caught up in the backfield; (Darren) McFadden draws a lot of attention. When that guy went in motion, I was like, somebody's out there. That's all I was thinking.

``At the snap, aw, man, he was by himself, so you take off to try to make a play. We were both trying to make a play on the ball. I don't even think he knew he caught it.''

The arrival of Nick Saban was meaningful for Johnson because of Saban's keen interest and expertise in coaching defensive backs.

``When I first heard he was helping out with DBs, I was kind of nervous,'' he said. ``It's like the head man is over here every day with us. You don't want to mess up or get on the wrong page with him. As we got out there in practice, it became more comfortable with him over there every day, because he knows what he's talking about.

``Every day I get a chance to go talk to him, I try to talk to him. I like conversing with him. He's always got something positive to tell you that can help you a lot.'' ■

Rashad Johnson was determined to make it at Bama.

For a store near you visit us at www.alafarm.com

SHOWCASE

FFA - 4-H Collectors Pocket Knife

AFC No. 478792. Commemorative knife includes metal case. Surgical steel clip and spey blades. A portion of the proceeds go to FFA and 4-H.

$49.99

Start Saving Your Rain Water!

Rubbermaid

Water Tanks

#42-42 100 Gal.
AFC No. 307004
$81.99

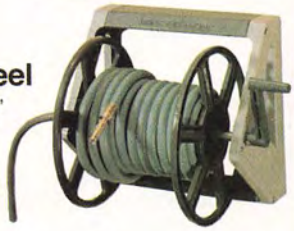
#42-45 150 Gal.
AFC No. 307006
$136.99

ReelEasy

Wall-Mount Hose Reel

Holds 100 feet of 5/8" hose (not included). #2388310. AFC #478559.

$34.99



ReelEasy

Hose Reel Cart

$34.99

Holds 175 feet of 5/8" hose (not included). #2385575. AFC #478558.

ENFORCER.

FIRE ANT KILLER GRANULES

Highly effective granular insecticide. Economical 3.5 lb. bag treats up to 14 mounds. Contains Permethrin.
AFC #660170

$5.49

Marine Battery Charger 10amp, 6amp, 2amp

Charger/Maintainer/Tester. For deep-cycle 12-volt marine, automotive, AGM and gell cell batteries. #SSC1000A. AFC #477760.

$79.99

FOOTBALL BY KIRK McNAIR

Catching Up

Notes on the state of Crimson Tide football

No news is good news, goes the adage. Those in the news business would beg to differ, but in the summer, it makes sense from the standpoint of a college football team. It's easy to think that news about players in the off season would involve quitting or flunking out or trouble with the law. And those things happen.

But most news is more mundane, though it's sometimes made to seem bigger than it is to make up for paucity.

"Saban won't sell potato chips!"

One of the biggest stories of the summer involved Nick Saban signing a contract to be Alabama's football coach in mid-June. That was not really a huge surprise since he had been on the job since January.

There was bad news: a player transferring, some self-reported secondary NCAA violations, faculty unhappy with the ticket situation.

And there were announcements of all-star watch lists and predictions on the upcoming season.

Catching up:

SABAN CONTRACT

It took awhile, as Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore had predicted when he announced Nick Saban as head football coach of the Crimson Tide in January. "Lawyers will be working on the contract," Moore said, explaining that he didn't expect it quickly.

On June 15 Saban met with reporters to confirm that he had, indeed, sealed the deal. And who wouldn't? It was revealed in the 32-page contract that Saban will earn $32 million over the next eight years.

Of course, those who had seen the sky falling when Saban didn't sign his contract as he deplaned in Tuscaloosa from Miami quickly found a new concern. There is no buyout clause. Saban can walk out on the deal with no penalty.

Saban will have to get by on $3.5 million this year, but the salary escalates to $4.2 million annually for the final three years of the contract, which ends January 31, 2015.

Saban gets the use of two full-size cars, a membership to NorthRiver Yacht Club, a $400,000 bonus for winning the national championship, and the use of the school jet for 25 personal hours per year.

University President Dr. Robert Witt called the contract "one of the soundest business decisions The University of Alabama has ever made."

Saban will not participate in advertising endorsements and has a limited number of required public engagements and television and radio obligations. But, as Saban said, "I do things to support The University and I will do things to support The University. I think our image as an institution is really important."

NCAA VIOLATIONS

Although the Freedom Of Information Act was designed for more important business, it has become a tool of many sportswriters. And a school such as Alabama is the type of big game reporters are looking for.

One must understand the big picture. If a school is doing a diligent job of compliance, it is likely to self-report more violations than a school that is doing a poor job of compliance. It's the same as if a school gives away high grades to its athletes; the "record" will show that the school has a high grade point average in its athletics department. The surface is not the true picture.

Journalists snagging a handful of self-reported secondary violations didn't get trophy stuff. It was summer news that The University had self-reported eight secondary NCAA violations-three involving football-over the previous seven months.

School officials take compliance seriously, but said these were not serious violations.

"There is no lingering after-effect to the things that occurred," Media Relations Director Doug Walker said. He said the violations were all isolated incidents and not a pattern of lacking NCAA compliance.

Self-reporting secondary violations is a standard part of NCAA compliance. Any penalty would likely be nominal.

The football violations involved a booster having impermissible contact with a prospective student-athlete, a member of the coaching staff providing improper transportation for a prospect's family and friend, and a booster having contact with a prospect and providing him with a book. There were also reports for baseball, men's track, women's track, women's tennis, and swimming.

TRANSFERS

There was a bit of flap this summer when back-up quarterback Jimmy Barnes left the Tide. Although he said it involved lack of playing time, Jimmy's father got a different message. John Barnes, one of the nation's most respected high school coaches, said his son had left Alabama because he was uncomfortable with new Coach Nick Saban. Saban said he had a conversation with the quarterback in which he asked him to stay at Bama and said that Jimmy gave no indication he was unhappy with anything other than playing time (presumably that Barnes wasn't going to get much).

Barnes was the back-up to John Parker Wilson last year and saw action in two games, completing six of 11 passes for 45 yards and a touchdown. He had surgery late last season and was limited in the spring as Greg McElroy took the back-up role.

Barnes transferred to Division I-AA Weber State in Ogden, Utah, where he is immediately eligible.

Freshman tailback Jamar Taylor is leaving Alabama having never played a game. Taylor reported in the spring semester and went through spring training and had a good A-Day game (10 carries for 44 yards). Rumors surfaced early in the summer that he might be leaving. Later Saban said that he and Taylor had agreed that Taylor needed to be closer to his Lakeland home and would transfer to South Florida.

WATCH LISTS

The Outland Trophy, awarded to the nation's best interior lineman in college football, has upcoming Alabama sophomore Andre Smith on its pre-season watch list. Junior Antoine Caldwell is on the watch list for the Rimington Trophy, awarded to the nation's best college center.

The Outland Trophy is selected by the Football Writer's Association of America. It will be announced December 6 in Orlando, Florida.

Smith, who started at left tackle for Alabama as a true freshman and played more snaps than any other Crimson Tide player last year, was the only sophomore on the list.

For the second straight year, Caldwell finds his name on the prestigious list. He was named to the watch list prior to the 2006 season after only playing one game at center in his collegiate career. Last season Caldwell started all 13 games at center.

The Rimington winner is selected by determining the consensus All-American center pick from four existing All America Teams, including the American Football Coaches Association, Walter Camp Foundation, Sporting News and Football Writers Association of America. The winner will be honored at an awards banquet at the Rococo Theater in Lincoln, Nebraska in January of 2008.

PREDICTIONS

After a 6-7 record last year, big losses on the defense, and a coaching change, Alabama is not likely to be considered in many pre-season polls to be among the nation's top college football teams for 2007. Surprisingly, though, the pre-season magazine that year-in and year-out is far superior in its predictions gives Bama a chance to be very good.

"Phil Steele's 2007 College Football Preview" has the Crimson Tide ranked 17th in the nation, behind LSU (2), Georgia (11), South Carolina (13)

and Florida (14) in the SEC. He predicts Bama as the nation's fourth most improved team and eighth biggest surprise.

TICKET WOES

One of the summer blockbuster stories from The Birmingham News is that more than half the ticket requests from University of Alabama faculty and staff will not be filled this year. In 2006 faculty and staff ordered approximately 4,500 tickets and all were allocated. This year faculty and staff have more than doubled their requests to a total of some 9,300 tickets (over 10 per cent of capacity of Bryant-Denny Stadium) and the athletics department will fulfill approximately 4,500-the same as last year. A priority system determines allocation.

WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR

Many believe sportswriters get paid to go to football games. Sportswriters don't see it exactly the same way. It's not likely that Alabama will have to pay people to go to Crimson Tide football games in 2008, but there's a good chance that faculty and staff will have no problem in getting their ticket orders filled.

Although one game remains to be announced, it is not likely to be a big name opponent because of the lateness. Earlier a 2008 schedule had been leaked (though not announced) and it appeared to be the weakest Tide schedule in history. Yes, Auburn is on the home schedule. But it is unlikely any of the remaining seven teams will rank among the nation's top 50.

The non-conference opponents are Western Kentucky, Tulane, and Northern Illinois (Bama's chance for revenge for the 2003 loss). The SEC opponents in Tuscaloosa in addition to Auburn are Kentucky, Ole Miss and Mississippi State. Originally, Texas-El Paso (Mike Price finally getting to coach a game in Tuscaloosa) had been included, but that game has been cancelled. As for now Bama has three open dates in 2008–September 13, October 11, and November 22–and needs to find a 12th game.

Ironically, Saban spoke to the Rotary Club of Birmingham this summer and the Birmingham News reported that in the question-answer segment that Saban said, "I'd like to play Notre Dame. We played them three times at Michigan State and beat them three times. That was a great national game, it creates fan interest and TV will always jump on those games."

Among the other teams he'd like to schedule, Saban named North Carolina, Georgia Tech, Penn State, and Oklahoma. ■

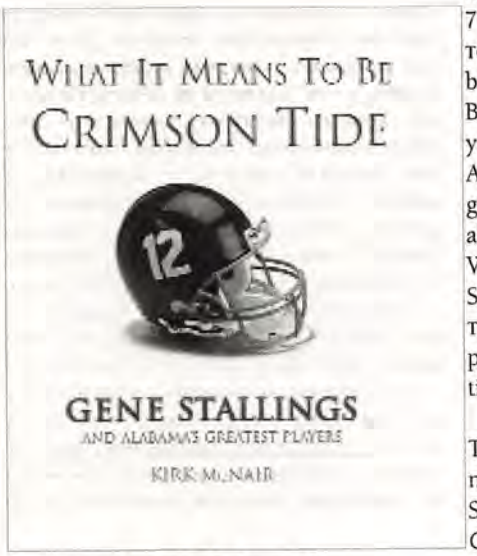
2008 Alabama Football Schedule:

August 30–Western Kentucky
September 6–Tulane
September 13–Open
September 20–@ Arkansas
September 27–@ Georgia
October 4–Kentucky
October 11–Open
October 18–Ole Miss
October 25–@ Tennessee
November 1–Northern Illinois
November 8–Mississippi State
November 15–@ LSU
November 22–Open
November 29–Auburn

What It Means To Be Crimson Tide

Gene Stallings and Alabama's Greatest Players

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us What it means to be Crimson Tide, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of What it means to be Crimson Tide is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.



The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall of Fame caliber coach himself.

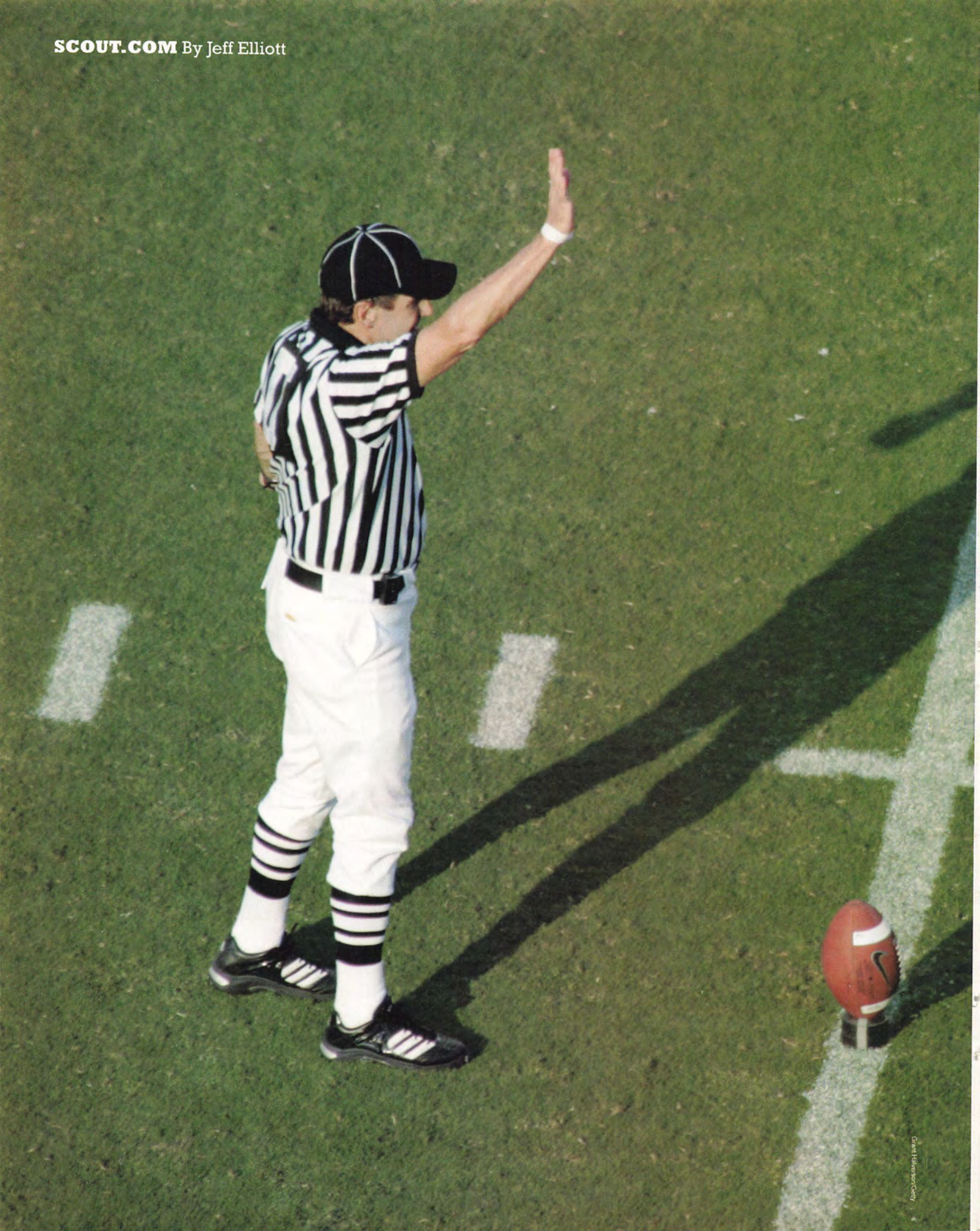
Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'Bama Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did *not* become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy ($27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

SCOUT.COM By Jeff Elliott



Grant Halverson/Getty

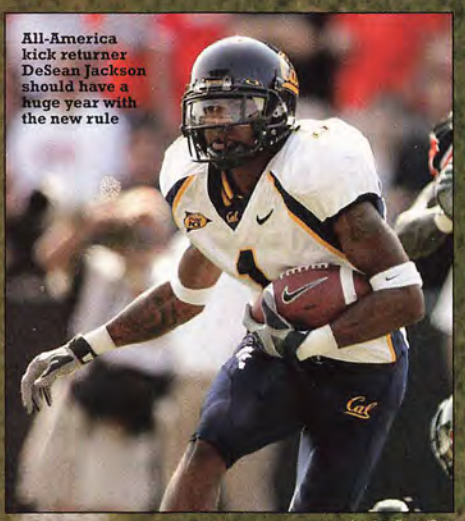
BANKING ON HUGE RETURNS

Moving the kickoff back to the 30-yard line is intended to add more excitement while helping to shorten the length of games

It's often referred to as one of the most exciting plays in college football.

Which is why some may scratch their head and ask, why tamper with something like the football kickoff return that is already one of the staples that makes your game the great attraction that it is today?

When the NCAA Football Rules Committee assembled during the offseason, it had a certain agenda, one that did not target a specified area or rule, but rather a general concern. The committee was looking to restore the number of plays in a college game while at the same time, keeping close tabs on the elapsed time needed to play a college contest.



All-America kick returner DeSean Jackson should have a huge year with the new rule

Jonathan Ferrey/Getty

The year before, this same committee made wide-ranging rule changes that were reluctantly accepted by college coaches. All were implemented with the same goal in mind - reduce the time it takes to play a normal college game.

Too often, the college game was exceeding 3½ hours in length, some even longer. The goal was to keep it closer to NFL standards of three hours, a desire shared by the televising networks as well. But while the numerous rule changes dealing with when the clock would start accomplished the task of shortening the game, they had a negative effect as well. The average number of plays for a college game took a hit.

"The changes we made last year, overall, did not have a positive effect on college football at all levels," said Michael Clark, chair of the committee and head coach at Bridgewater (Virginia) College. "Our charge is to protect the game and do what is best for college football.

"Last year's game lost too many plays, but it accomplished the need to shorten the overall time it takes to play a game. The changes we have made for 2007 balance both of these issues."

With that goal in mind, the committee recommended seven measures which it estimated could shave 11-14 minutes in a game without having an effect on the playing time of the game itself or that would cause for a reduction in the number of plays in a game. Simply stated, the committee was looking to rid itself of dead time in a game.

One of the biggest changes was limiting the play clock to 15 seconds (from the normal 25 seconds) following a television timeout. This only appears to make good sense. Teams currently have nearly two minutes to discuss an upcoming play during a TV timeout. It should not need another 25 seconds once the commercials are over and play has resumed, the rules committee figured.

With about 20 television timeouts per game, saving 10 seconds each time, adds up to three minutes of saved time.

Another major time-saving measure invoked was reducing team timeouts by 30 seconds. It works in basketball, why wouldn't it be acceptable in football?

Depending on how many timeouts are called by the two teams, it could eliminate another three to six minutes of game time, without taking any time off the game clock.

A third significant change from a time standpoint may reduce the length of time it takes to play the game while at the same time, adding to the number of plays in a game. It involves kickoffs, where there are two key changes for the

BANKING ON HUGE RETURNS

2007 season regarding the play that starts all games and the 10 additional kickoffs that take place during an average game.

The committee recommended, and endorsed, the return of the rule that was changed in 2005, regarding the start of the clock on a kickoff. Prior to 2005, the clock started when a member of the receiving team legally touched the ball. The rule had been changed in 2006 so the clock would begin when the kicker kicked the ball, but teams were taking advantage of the rule change by running offsides on purpose to take time off the clock late in the game if they held the lead.

"I don't think that's what the committee really intended when they changed the rule the year before," said Ty Halpin of the NCAA office, a spokesman for the NCAA rules oversight panel which accepted the football rules committee recommendation of going back to the old rule. "That's a rule the committee regretted making."

Waiting to start the clock when the receiving team touches the ball will actually lengthen the game slightly. But

Ronald Martinez/Getty

"If you ask our defensive coaches [about it], they throw up," Brown said. "If you ask our offensive coaches, they're pumped up."

the committee countered that move by making a change it feels will reduce the total time needed to play the game AND increase the number of plays in a game. The committee moved the kickoff back from the 35-yard line back to the 30-yard line, the same location as NFL kickoffs.

Adding an additional five yards has accomplished several goals. Most college kickers do not kick the ball past the back line of the endzone. Kicking the same distance now means the ball will only go midway into the end zone. With the defending team forced to run an additional five yards, the theory is that teams will run back a kickoff from the endzone with the intent of advancing beyond the 20-yard line.

At the same time, a returned kick accomplishes two other goals in the committee's mind. It starts the play clock and it gives teams another action play. Without an increased likelihood of returning a kickoff, there would be no time coming off the game clock now that the rule has reverted back to not starting the clock until the receiving team touches the ball. It would mean the evil "dead time" syndrome would have won this battle.

"By moving the kickoffs back to the thirty, it should create more opportunities for what the committee felt is one of the most exciting plays in the college game," Halpin said. "We'll have to wait and see if it has an impact on scoring, but we think it could as teams will likely have better field position following the kickoff."

If history repeats, there will be an increase in kickoff returns. In 1986, the NCAA imposed a rule change that moved kickoffs from the 40-yard line back to the 35-yard line. There was an immediate impact on the number of kickoff returns.

In 1985, teams were returning an average of 60 percent of kickoffs from the 40-yard line as kickers were continually booting the ball through the endzone. But when the kicking tee was placed at the 35-yard line the following year, teams returned an average of 77 percent of all kickoffs.

The average yards returned was about the same. It rose just slightly from 19.4 yards a return in '85 to 19.8 the following year. Whether the movement of kickoffs back to the 30-yard line has the same type of impact this year remains to be seen.

In 1999 teams returned more than 90 percent of all kickoffs, which still stands as the highest mark posted since the NCAA began charting such numbers in the late 1930s. But a year later, the percentage dropped to slightly more than 80 percent and the following year, it took another drop to 76.9 percent.

The next three years receiving teams got a little more aggressive as the percentage of kickoffs returned rose each season, peaking at 79.9 percent in 2004 before dropping to 72.7 in 2005 and increasing to 78.2 percent last year.

Grant Teaff , executive director of the American Football Coaches Association, calls the rule change moving kickoffs back to the 30-yard line one that was needed for the betterment of the game.

"The kickers have gotten so good now-a-days, they're going to get the ball out of the endzone," said Teaff, former head coach at Baylor. "It's really a two-fold reason why the committee elected to change the rule back to the thirty. First is that the kickoff return is electrifying. Just look at how the Ohio State-Florida game for the national championship started last year. The excitement it brings to the game is such that you want the kickoff return to be a part of the game.

"The second part, honestly, was that there was a way to shave off some time it took to play the game. On a kickoff return, the clock will start as soon as the receiver touches the ball in play. Otherwise, officials have to take the time to go retrieve the ball, you have to stop players who are engaged in either trying to make a block or on the other side, trying to make a tackle, then run up to the 20-yard line and get everybody ready and then you can get the clock going. It won't save a great deal, but it will save some, especially when

 TO SUBSCRIBE CALL 1-888-979-0979

Kickoff Statistics

Year	No.	Ret.	Yards	Percent Returned
1939	2.14	19.3	41.3	.764
1950	3.46	16.6	57.4	.889
1960	3.05	18.8	57.3	.890
1970	3.69	19.0	70.1	.828
1980	2.91	19.0	55.1	.651
1985	2.94	19.4	57.0	.603
1986	3.78	19.8	74.6	.770
1987	3.89	19.1	74.5	.780
1988	*3.97	19.4	77.1	.778
1989	3.92	19.7	*77.2	.776
1990	3.79	19.6	74.5	.738
Last 10 years				
1997	3.47	20.3	70.5	.816
1998	3.52	20.6	72.4	.837
1999	3.36	20.3	68.2	*.901
2000	3.49	19.6	68.6	.807
2001	3.43	20.7	71.0	.769
2002	3.47	20.2	70.4	.774
2003	3.30	20.6	67.8	.781
2004	3.34	20.4	68.1	.799
2005	3.30	20.8	68.6	.727
2006	3.10	*21.9	67.8	.782

**NCAA record*

Kickoff Rule Changes

1925 Kickoffs are set for the 40-yard line.
1948 One-inch kicking tees permitted.
1965 Two-inch kicking tees permitted.
1986 Kickoffs moved back to the 35-yard line.
1989 Kicking tees eliminated for extra point and field goal attempts.
2007 Kickoffs moved back to the 30-yard line.

Grant Halverson/Getty

you add up how many kickoffs there are in a normal game."

But as with any rule change, Teaff notes there will be proponents and opponents, determined by which side of the ball your perspective is coming from.

"Defensive coaches are much less thrilled about this than the offensive coaches," he noted. "It's likely to give teams better field position to start their drives. That will be especially crucial late in the game for a team that is trailing and gets a good return on the kickoff."

A poll of Big 12 coaches in the spring brought about the expected mixed reviews.

Kansas State coach Ron Prince indicated his staff had anticipated the change and gave his special teams an opportunity to work on adjustments during spring drills.

"We thought that was one [rule change] that might be made, so we've been practicing with the ball on the thirty all spring," Prince said during a teleconference call of his colleagues to discuss their spring practices. "Looking at the NFL, it's going to be so hard to get touchbacks now. The kick is going to be driven so low in an effort to get it to the end zone, coverage teams won't really have a chance to go down and set a pattern."

Others like Oklahoma head coach Bob Stoops had concerns about the safety factor. With players running full speed for a longer distance, the risk of injuries increases.

"You have to worry about more opportunity for injury because those are high-impact plays," Stoops said. "Outside of that, we know it will create more excitement."

And veteran Texas coach Mack Brown may have summed it up best, declaring that it's all a matter of which side of the ball one is coaching.

"If you ask our defensive coaches [about it], they throw up," Brown said. "If you ask our offensive coaches, they're pumped up."

Chances are fans will quickly take a liking to the change. Kickoffs are always a crowd-pleaser, whether it's a 15-yard return or one that goes the distance. The time-factor doesn't seem to be quite the concern to fans that it is to administrators.

Teaff said a number of coaches from the AFCA complained about the 2006 rule changes which resulted in about 14 fewer plays per game in Division 1-A. There were also concerns about teams having the opportunity to rally late in the games.

The changes, including the five-yard move in the kickoff, should accomplish the two goals of speeding up the game and restoring the average number of plays in a game that existed in previous years.

"One of the things that caused the hullabaloo a year ago, is we ended up with rules that were vehemently opposed by our association to speed up the game," Teaff said. "Administrators and television have pushed for the shortening of the game. That's part of the overall issue. TV is a major driving force in promoting and funding the game.

There's a certain a push to make it more sleek.

"And at the same time, you don't lose the appeal or the excitement of a kickoff return," Teaff said. ■

ITS 20GB HARD DRIVE ONLY ADDS TO ITS PERFORMANCE.

ALL-NEW DODGE AVENGER. MyGIG™ Multimedia Infotainment System* | Six-speaker Boston Acoustics® sound system† | Heated and cooled cup holder† | 3.5L V6 with 6-speed AutoStick®† | Let the performance begin | **DODGE.COM/AVENGER**

*MyGIG in-dash DVD capability is not available in all states. See your dealer for details. †Available.
Chrysler Financial is a business unit of DaimlerChrysler Financial Services.

Chrysler Financial

BUCKLE UP

GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS

DODGE

The Next Level

Tiders have opportunities in pro football, basketball, baseball

Over 300 million Americans did not get drafted by a National Football League team this year. Worldwide, the number is over six and a half billion. And yet being the 255th man selected draws an inordinate amount of attention.

Ramzee Robinson

That's what happened to Ramzee Robinson this year. Robinson was the final man selected in the draft, earning him the title of "Mr. Irrelevant" by The Commodores Club of the Newport Beach (California) Chamber of Commerce. Robinson was selected by the Detroit Lions.

The 32nd annual Lowsman Trophy was presented to the Huntsville native at an affair in Newport Beach.

Started by community philanthropist Paul Salata, "Irrelevant Week" was created to honor the underdog. With the motto of "doing something nice for someone for no reason at all," Newport Beach's "Irrelevant Week" spotlights the last pick in the NFL draft with a week of festivities in his honor.

Robinson took part in an arrival party and press conference, was a special guest at Disneyland, and was featured at the All-Star Lowsman Banquet.

There's more to the event than frivolity. It is a fund-raiser, with proceeds going to benefit Newport Beach area families of United States military personnel

Over the years, former Alabama players have gone on to star in professional sports. The three biggest of those pro sports have annual drafts, and Crimson Tide performers were selected for the National Football League (NFL), Major League Baseball (MLB), and the National Basketball Association (NBA).

Here is a recap of the drafts:

FOOTBALL

In addition to Robinson, two other Alabama seniors were selected in the NFL draft.

Fullback LéRon McClain from Northport was the first Crimson Tide player taken in this year's draft and was the 100th Alabama player selected since 1982. He was drafted in the fourth round with the 137th overall pick by the Baltimore Ravens.

McClain started all 13 games in his senior season with the Crimson Tide. He carried the ball 11 times for 64 yards while also leading the way for the other running backs as one of the top blocking fullbacks in the country. He was also an effective pass receiver with 20 catches for 175 yards and three touchdowns. He had the game-winning two-yard touchdown catch in overtime against Ole Miss.

In the seventh round, Kenneth Darby, a running back from Huntsville, was the 246th overall pick and 36th choice in the seventh round by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Darby was the starting running back in all 13 games last season. He ran for 835 yards on 210 carries as a senior. He also was third on the team with 23 receptions for 130 yards and one touchdown. He finished his career third on the all-time rushing yards list at Alabama with 3,329 career yards. He is also fifth all-time with 3,663 career all-purpose yards.

Robinson and Darby were high school and college teammates and were drafted in the seventh round.

Robinson was sixth last season with 46 tackles in 13 starts at the left cornerback spot. He recorded two interceptions with one returned for a 34-yard touchdown against Florida International. He led the team with seven pass breakups. He finished his career with 146 tackles, four interceptions and 22 pass breakups.

In Alabama's history there have been 304 players drafted into professional football. Since the first draft in 1936, the Crimson Tide have had three or more players drafted 58 times with three or more in each of the past eight years.

The day after the draft, six Alabama football players signed free agent contracts with NFL teams.

Tim Castille, a fullback from Birmingham, signed with the Arizona Cardinals; defensive tackle Jeremy Clark of Daphne signed with the Philadelphia Eagles; safety Jeffrey Dukes of Oxford, Mississippi, signed with the St. Louis Rams; defensive end Chris Harris of Tuscaloosa signed with the Kansas City Chiefs; outside linebacker Juwan Simpson of Decatur signed with the Green Bay Packers; and defensive tackle Kyle Tatum of Prattville signed with the Baltimore Ravens.

As it stands now, there will be 32 former Alabama players in NFL camps.

BASKETBALL

The next time he hears a television announcer say, "We'll be back after these important messages," Jermareo Davidson might reflexively flinch. When he was watching the 2007 NBA draft on ESPN from his home in Atlanta, the network broke for commercials. The draft didn't stop, though. And when programming resumed after the important messages, Davidson saw one of the most important messages of his life.

He had been selected as the 36th overall pick by the Golden State Warriors. ESPN was using a crawl across the bottom of the screen to keep up with the draft, even during the commercial. But Davidson didn't notice it for a few moments.

Almost as soon as Davidson discovered he was a Golden State Warrior he became a Charlotte Bobcat. Golden State selected Davidson, but made a quick trade that sent him to Charlotte.

Th e 6-10 All-Southeastern Conference forward said, "This is something I've always dreamed about, playing in the NBA. I feel like I've worked hard to make it happen, but at the same time, I am very grateful to all the people in my life who helped me make it happen. I appreciate all the people who have been there for me."

Davidson, 22, averaged 10.1 points and 7.3 rebounds for his four-year career at Alabama. He averaged 14.0 points and 8.2 rebounds his senior year. He finished his Alabama career ranked 10th all-time in rebounding with 918 career boards and tied for 23rd all-time in scoring with 1,268 career points in 126 career games. He started in 121 games.

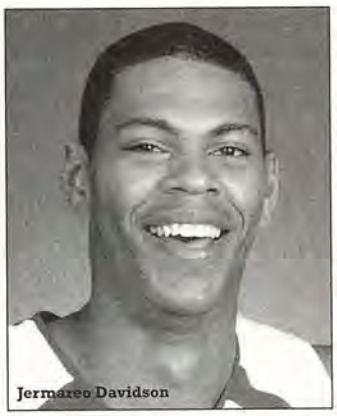
"We're extremely happy for Jermareo," said Alabama Coach Mark Gottfried. "I think it's important to note that it's extremely gratifying to see a player who has gone through so much this past year get rewarded. And he's improved so much in his development from his freshman year to now in being drafted. I'm very proud for him."

Davidson's started in all 30 games he played in a senior season marred by the double tragedies of losing both his brother and his girlfriend within weeks of one another in November and December.

He's the 32nd Alabama player to be drafted by the NBA, and the 39th NBA player for the Tide.

BASEBALL

Alabama sophomore right-handed pitcher Tommy Hunter was the


Jermareo Davidson

Tommy Hunter

54th overall pick by the Texas Rangers, becoming the fourth player in school history to be drafted in the first or supplemental round of the Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft. From his standpoint, there was all sorts of good news that day.

"It has been a very exciting day," Hunter said from his home in Indianapolis, Indiana. "I am very excited to be the 54th overall pick in the country. I could not be happier with that. And, I just caught another four-pound bass."

At least for a while, Alabama baseball fans can take some comfort. Several weeks after the draft, Hunter told BamaMag.com, "I'm still unsigned. As of right now I'm still enrolled for the fall at Alabama." In baseball, players can return to their college teams even after being drafted as long as they do not sign away their amateur status. Hunter indicated he was in no hurry to do so.

"I won't know anything until probably the last day, August 15," he said. "Negotiations are going on right now and I'm waiting to see what happens."

"I have already spoken with Texas and we are going to meet to see what their plans might be for me," Hunter said shortly after the draft. "There is a lot of information to process right now. I have not talked with Coach (Jim) Wells, but I will do that before I make any decisions."

Before the draft, Hunter said he had a signing amount in mind, and if his drafting team met his expectations with an offer he would probably turn pro.

Almost everyone expects Hunter to take the money rather than return to Alabama for another season.

He said he expected Texas to be the team that selected him. Hunter said, "They had shown a lot of interest in me, especially recently. It was really just a matter of when because they had so many picks."

Hunter was the fifth player drafted by the Rangers on the first of the MLB Draft's two days. He is the first Alabama player to be drafted by the Rangers since third baseman Bret Elbin was selected in the 1983 draft.

Hunter becomes the fourth Alabama player taken in the first round (or supplemental round) of the MLB draft, joining Joe Vitiello, Jeremy Brown and Taylor Tankersley. Vitiello was the seventh overall pick of the 1991 MLB Draft by the Kansas City Royals. Brown was the 33rd pick (Supplemental Comp A Round) in 2002. Tankersley was the 27th overall pick by the Florida Marlins in 2004.

It didn't take center fielder Emeel Salem long to get word of his status when the second day of the MLB draft got underway June 8. He was the first player taken on the second day of the draft. Salem was the first pick of the sixth round (185th overall pick) by the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Salem was a 10th round pick last year by the Baltimore Orioles, but opted to return for his senior season with the Crimson Tide. After leading team in hitting for the second year in a row and racking up more academic honors, including the 2007 H. Boyd McWhorter SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year award, that decision paid off.

"This just makes my decision to come back my senior year that much better," Salem said. "I had a great time and career at Alabama. This is very exciting to me and I am ready to go play baseball. Tampa Bay is a great organization and a great fit for me and the type of player that I am."

Senior shortstop Greg Paiml was taken in the 15th round (479th overall pick) by the Chicago White Sox.

He said, "I was taken a lot earlier than I was expecting. I had been talking with the White Sox quite a bit, so that was not a surprise. I was expecting to go in the 30th round."

Paiml said he got the news off the internet right before lunch. "I was headed out to lunch and checked the internet to get an update on the draft and saw my name in the 15th round," he said. "Then my phone started ringing. I had so many calls from family and friends, it took the White Sox about 15-20 minutes to get in touch with me."

Sophomore shortstop Cale Iorg, who earned Freshman All-SEC honors for the Crimson Tide in 2005, was taken in the sixth round (211th overall pick) by the Detroit Tigers. Iorg was taken despite serving a mission the last two years in Lisbon, Portugal for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Iorg, who hit .280 with five home runs and 15 stolen bases at Alabama as a freshman, will decide between pro baseball, returning to Alabama, or perhaps going to another college, sources said.

Alabama also had six signees taken during the second day of the MLB Draft. That list includes catcher Chase Weems (sixth round, New York Yankees), pitcher Danny Danielson (seventh, Los Angeles Dodgers), pitcher Austin Bailey (15th, Boston Red Sox), pitcher Connor Hohen (21st, Milwaukee Brewers), infielder Ross Wilson (35th, San Diego Padres) and pitcher Jimmy Nelson (39th, Cincinnati Reds).

Danielson, has already signed a professional contract and will not be playing for Alabama. ■

NEED ONE TICKET

ALABAMA FOOTBALL TICKETS

ALABAMA BASKETBALL

THE MASTERS

SUPER BOWL

ALL ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS!

FULLY LICENSED TICKET BROKERAGE

RAY WELLS COREY GIBBS JOHN ED BELVIN

1100 14TH AVE., SUITE 20
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35401

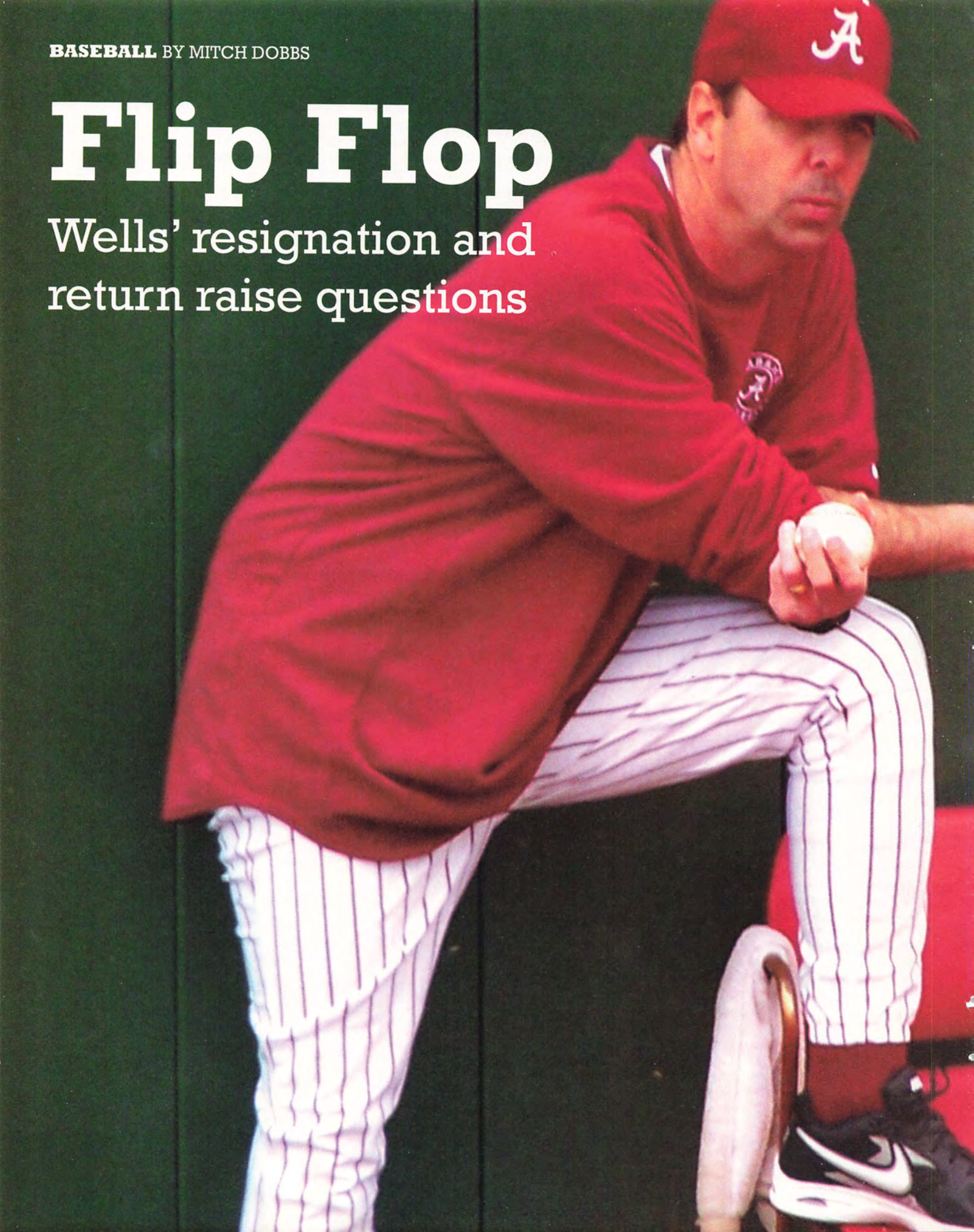
(205) 758-1199
(877) 758-1199

WWW.NEEDONETICKET.COM

BASEBALL BY MITCH DOBBS

Flip Flop

Wells' resignation and return raise questions



Whether it has been calling for an unsung player to pinch-hit in a critical situation, or leaving a pitcher in to face one more batter, Jim Wells' strategic moves often have been unconventional and sometimes second-guessed. But more times than not they have turned out to be right. That is part of the reason he is the winningest coach in the history of Alabama baseball, which is the winningest baseball team in Southeastern Conference history.

That record was widely reported this summer when Wells made two more unconventional moves. The first was when the 52-year-old Wells announced that he was walking away from the Bama job without any future coaching plans. The second was when a week later he asked for his job back. Wells was welcomed back with open arms by Athletics Director Mal Moore and by Crimson Tide players and fans.

But the odd week raised important questions about the program Wells has led at The Capstone for 13 season.

Why did Wells decide to leave in the first place, and what if anything changed to make him reverse course? And while most think Wells ultimately made the best decision for both himself and The University in returning, how will his actions over the summer affect the program going forward?

On Monday, June 18, Wells met with Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore where they discussed the future of the program and Wells' status as coach. According to a source Wells indicated to Moore his intention to leave the school then, though Wells' staff was not aware of the decision until three days later when they began sending out notices that Bama baseball summer camps would be cancelled due to Wells' leaving.

Both Wells and Moore were vague about what took place in their discussions, and Wells said his decision to leave Alabama--and his eventual decision to return--was based on his own personal reasons more than anything else.

Wells mentioned wanting to spend time with his elderly mother, who lives in Louisiana, in his departing statement.

Though Alabama won the SEC regular season, was a number four national seed and Super Regional host in 2006, the 2007 team was under-whelming. The squad made a late-season surge that came crashing down with two quick losses in the SEC Tournament and Wells seemed despondent. Alabama was 31-26, and missed an NCAA Regional.

"I had been dealing with it for a while," he said. "It wasn't a sudden impulse. You do something for 30 years..."

Wells has compiled a 553-272 record in his career with the Crimson Tide and Alabama has played in 10 NCAA Tournaments in his 13 years. He has coached the Tide to six SEC Tournament championships. Wells twice has been named SEC Coach of the Year (1996, 2002) by his peers.

There was a shake-up of the staff following Wells' return.

In addition to the family matters and the recently passed lackluster season, Wells had also been frustrated by an uneven playing field that finds Alabama on the short end of the stick in recruiting capability. There was a perceived lack of support in terms of facilities improvements. Although Alabama has had renovations to Sewell-Thomas Stadium (which opened in 1947) it is considered no better than middle of the pack among baseball facilities in the SEC.

In June, 2006, Wells had conversations with LSU Athletics Director Skip Bertman, the legendary former Tigers coach, about the vacant LSU head coaching position. Wells withdrew his name from consideration for the position after meetings with Moore and University President Robert Witt.

"I did want to meet with Coach Moore and Dr. Witt to discuss the future of our program in all areas, including academics, scholarships and facilities," Wells said at the time. "We met last week, and I felt Dr. Witt and Coach Moore were very helpful, and I look forward to working with them in the future."

A new scoreboard with a video screen was installed for the 2007 season and the elevator shaft was covered in brick-which serves primarily to improve the appearance upon entrance to the athletics complex from Bryant Drive.

Scholarship disparity among schools in the SEC and nationally, largely but not completely due to state lottery scholarship programs, makes recruiting a challenge for Alabama.

During his un-retirement press conference, Wells admitted those issues were still a concern, but maintained they weren't "at the core" of his decision.

"I can't give it to you A-B-C," Well said. "I can just tell you I know it wasn't right and I'm sorry to put you folks through this. Those are all factors out there. What their value is varies. It's strictly me. I know that's an easy way out."

Wells now says he made the decision in haste.

"There has been some soul searching," he said. "I really thought I made the right decision.

"I wanted to really sit and reflect. I'd like to take the summer but this is college baseball and there's somebody to recruit every other day and it never ends. And Mal Moore told me take all the time I wanted."

The wry Wells humor was evident as he added, " I look forward to football season. How many days? Let's get on to that."

Many things changed over the week between his departure and his return to cause him to reconsider. First, Wells said things had improved "over in Louisiana" where his mother was, and he also indicated that he'd received further assurances on facilities from Moore.

"That needs to be done, obviously, in this league that we live in," Wells said, "but Coach Moore has always assured me that it will be done and I believe him. He understands it's not a luxury. It's kind of a necessity in this world, especially in this league."

Wells also had other moves apparently in the works to bring some zest back to the program. At the time of the announcement of his return he would neither confirm nor deny questions about specific staff changes, but two weeks later Wells announced the return of Mitch Gaspard as assistant coach and recruiting coordinator. Gaspard was a key figure in recruiting for Wells during his early tenure at Alabama when the Crimson Tide made it to the College World Series three times.

"He is a tireless worker and is one of the main reasons that we were so successful in the early stages of building our program at Northwestern State and Alabama," Wells said. "I am happy that he will be associated with the Alabama program once again."

Gaspard, who left Alabama to be the head coach at Northwestern State (where he also was an assistant under Wells before coming to Alabama) six years ago, likely would have been a prominent candidate for the Alabama head coaching position had Wells not returned.

"I think the program is at a point right now where I can provide some energy and help things to get back to what we had in the late '90s," Gaspard said in an interview with 'BAMA Magazine the afternoon his return to Alabama was announced. "Kids want to hear they have chance to go to Omaha and win a national championship. We've got to have nice recruiting plan of what need get back to that level. Things have changed over the past 10-12 years--players and recruiting tactics--but one it's The University of Alabama and it's a great place to be and that hasn't changed. It's a matter of getting there and selling."

Some might assume that means that all parties involved have either an expressed or implied secession plan for Gaspard to take over the program when wells leaves, but at 52, Wells said he does not intend to leave any time soon. He joked that he thought he could stay at Alabama for 25 more years.

"I'm trying to break Connie Mack's record," he said. (Mack coached the Philadelphia athletics for 50 consecutive seasons.) "I don't know. I can't answer that. I don't think anyone can. I'm just fortunate to be here today. I just removed myself from that position. I don't want to sound like Roger Clemons or Brett Favre. I feel good about it now and I'm excited. I think it's a pretty good team here next year."

Gaspard said there has been no talk of him following Wells, and that they had not discussed any timetable for Wells' future departure. Besides, Wells couldn't decide on what he was going to do from one week to the next, much less plan years in advance.

"That has not come up," Gaspard said. "My only agenda in coming here is to try to help Jim and the baseball team get back to Omaha. That's the only thing we discussed. We haven't talked about any timetables. We've got to get this program back to an elite level."

The day after Gaspard's hiring was announced (he'd been on the job for about a week) Wells brought in former standout catcher Dax Norris as a volunteer assistant. Norris was one of a tight-knit group of Wells' associates and confidants in baseball, and he had gone to the CWS as a player with Wells and Gaspard in 1996.

"I have always wanted to come back to Alabama and I am grateful for this opportunity," Norris said. "This is a great opportunity for me to continue to learn the game of baseball from someone I have so much respect for."

Norris had been an assistant coach at a high school in Niceville, Florida, after a long minor league career with the Braves and Astros' organizations.

"As a player, Dax was a tough competitor and I always knew he would make a great coach," Wells said. "I think he has a bright future in the coaching profession and the players will learn a great deal from him and his past experiences as a player here at Alabama and with the Atlanta Braves and Houston Astros."

Joe Raccuia, who was Wells' top assistant the last two seasons, was named head coach at Radford on July 9, and Bama's operations director Allen Rice went with him to be an on-the-field assistant. Former volunteer assistant Chad Oxendine obtained a position at Richmond University, and B.J. Green remained on Wells' staff as the number two assistant.

As a result of the back-and-forth move, Wells had to field uncomfortable questions about his level of commitment to the future of the program and the reasoning for his moves and why he ultimately decided to come back. On June 25 he was convinced that he wanted his old job back, and went to Moore to ask for it not knowing what his response would be.

"Well, it's my life, my family's life, and I'll just face the music and do it," he said.

"I realized what I had after I let it go, and I wanted to get it back."

He faced the music with his usual sense of humor and a reluctance to be the center of attention. When reminded that he had previously said he wanted to spend more time with his family, Wells said, "They don't want me there. This is a family decision. 'Please get out of the house.' There are only so many times you can sharpen the knives."

He thanked Moore and President Robert E. Witt for allowing him to return, something he did not do in his departing statement, even though he thanked the athletics director who hired him at Alabama, Hootie Ingram.

Faced with questions about how committed he is now, Wells said, "I can only tell you what I feel from my heart, and what I've gone through, and what I feel now, and give them the reasons why I probably made that decision a little prematurely. I wouldn't have felt the way I did the last six days if it was the right decision. I know that." ■

STAFF BY KIRK McNAIR

The Real Deals

There has been some turnover in athletics department

Whereas the Jim Wells resignation as Alabama baseball coach was a short-term situation (see Page 24), there have been changes in the Crimson Tide athletics department over the past few months.

Nick Saban made several changes in positions related to football, including replacing long-time trainer Rodney Brown this summer.

Brown was replaced by Jeff Allen as head football trainer. Brown was shifted to the new position of director of rehabilitation services for athletics.

Allen came to Alabama from Central Florida where he has been the head trainer since 2004. At Alabama, Allen's primary responsibilities will focus on the care and prevention of injuries for the football program.

"I felt like it was a great opportunity for me professionally to have the opportunity to work at The University of Alabama," Allen said. "This is a special opportunity at a special place. From a career standpoint this was a tremendous opportunity for me. From a personal standpoint I thought this was a great place to raise my family and a great atmosphere."

At UCF, Allen was in charge of all sports medicine needs for the department. Prior to his post at Central Florida, Allen was head trainer at Tennessee-Chattanooga from 2000-04 where he oversaw the athletics training operations for 16 varsity sports while handling all of the duties associated with the football program. Allen was an assistant trainer at Kentucky from 1997-2000, working primarily with the Wildcats football team, and served as an assistant trainer at Valdosta (Georgia) State from 1995-97, where he was head trainer for the football and baseball teams. He is a 1993 graduate of Georgia Southern University with a degree in Health and Physical Education.

In his new role, Brown will be responsible for oversight of all physical rehabilitation for all Crimson Tide student-athletes. Brown has been with the Alabama program since 1999 as head trainer. Prior to joining the athletics department, Brown worked for eight years as a part-time instructor in Alabama's athletic training education program while also working as a manager in Druid City Hospital's Sports Medicine department. From 1979 until 1987, he was a teacher, trainer and coach at Tuscaloosa County High School. He was a teacher and coach at Boteler Junior High from 1978-79.

Also in football, Saban brought in Scott Cochran as associate head strength and conditioning coach with oversight for football. Rocky Colburn remains head strength and conditioning coach with primary responsibilities now for baseball.

Cochran came to Alabama last winter from the New Orleans Hornets of the NBA, where he spent three seasons as an assistant strength coach. Prior to joining the Hornets staff, Cochran worked for his alma mater, LSU, under Saban as an assistant strength coach for the 2003-04 national champion Tigers football team. Cochran returned to his former school after starting his career in the strength and conditioning field at University Laboratory High School in Baton Rouge. He held that position from 1998-2001 and then went back to LSU as a graduate assistant for all sports from 2001-03. He was then hired on to the full-time staff for the 2003-04 season.

A native of New Orleans, Cochran received a bachelor's degree in kinesiology from LSU in 2001 and added a master's degree in sports management from LSU in 2003.

Colburn, a 1985 Alabama graduate, returned to The University in 2005 after seven years as an assistant strength and conditioning coach for the Atlanta Falcons, where he worked with another former Tide strength coach, Al Miller.

Colburn served as head football coach at Bibb County High School before going to the NFL. He was the assistant strength and conditioning coach at Alabama from 1987-92. He also coached one year at Samford.

As a player, Colburn was an academic All-SEC defensive back for the Crimson Tide under legendary coach Paul "Bear" Bryant from 1981-82 and Ray Perkins in 1983.

BASKETBALL

Alabama Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried seemed surprised that anyone questioned his promotion of Kobie Baker to assistant coach. When Tom Asbury was forced by health to retire after last season, many expected Gottfried to find an experienced replacement. Instead, Gottfried promoted the young and relatively inexperienced Baker to assistant coach.

The Tide head coach also announced the appointment of Jeff Dunlap to Baker's former position as director of basketball operations.

Baker has been at that post for the past year. Dunlap joins the Alabama staff from Western Michigan where he was an assistant coach.

Gottfried said, "He's earned the right to have this

Jeff Allen

Kobie Baker

promotion. He's done a very good job. He's very familiar with our program. He brings an energy and great recruiting abilities to our staff, and he has a great future in this profession."

Baker, 32, a Tuscaloosa native, has been an assistant coach at North Texas, Troy, Nicholls State and Southeastern Louisiana. Baker is a 1993 graduate of Tuscaloosa's Central High School and a 1998 graduate of Talladega College, helping lead Talladega College to the 1995 Southern States Conference Championship. He started his coaching career at Southeastern Louisiana upon graduation in 1998. He was an assistant coach at Troy in 2002.

While he was coaching and recruiting there, Troy won the 2002 Atlantic Sun championship. He left Troy to become the recruiting coordinator and assistant coach at Nicholls State and spent 2005 and 2006 as an assistant on Johnny Jones' staff at North Texas.

"I'm obviously very excited about this opportunity to continue to be a part of this great basketball program and staff," said Baker. "I'm looking forward to getting back on the floor and contributing as an assistant coach. This is an exceptional institution, and it's extra special for me, as a Tuscaloosa native, to not only be associated with The University of Alabama but to be a part of a program with such a strong basketball tradition."

Dunlap is a 1986 UCLA graduate who lettered three seasons for the Bruins. He leaves Western Michigan where he was an assistant coach since 2004 to join the Alabama staff. His background also includes being an assistant coach at Georgia from 1999 to 2003, Loyola, and Cal State Fullerton.

Gottfried said, "Jeff is someone I have known for 20 years. He's very familiar with our system and will be involved with a number of different aspects of our program. He brings great organizational skills and a great knowledge of the game as well."

Gottfried said in addition to these hirings, the roles of assistant coaches Philip Pearson and James Holland will expand. Gottfried believes both will eventually become head coaches. Gottfried's former assistants, Johnny Jones at North Texas and Tevester Anderson at Jackson State, both led as head coaches their teams to the 2007 NCAA tournament, and a third former assistant, Orlando Early, was named the 2007 Sun Belt Conference Coach of the Year at Louisiana Monroe.

SOFTBALL

Alyson Habetz was promoted from assistant coach to associate head coach of Alabama's powerful softball team. Head Coach Patrick Murphy announced the promotion.

Habetz, who has been on Murphy's staff since he took the head job prior to the 1999 season, has helped lead the Tide to nine NCAA tournament appearances, including College World Series berths in 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2006. During that span, Alabama also captured the Southeastern Conference regular season title in 2006 and a pair of tournament crowns in 2003 and 2005.

The Tide coaching staff has been named Regional Coaching Staff of the Year three times in Habetz' tenure, most recently in 2006. In her post as an assistant, Habetz was responsible for the outfield play and team offense while also supervising the Tide's camps and clinics throughout the year, duties she will retain in her new post.

Habetz has also proven herself as one of the best recruiting assistant coaches in the nation, helping Murphy put together some of the best recruiting classes in the country during her tenure at The Capstone.

A former All-Region and All-American softball player at Southwestern Louisiana, Habetz came to the Tide following a professional baseball career with the first women's professional league in baseball history. Habetz also broke barriers as a high school athlete, becoming the first female baseball player in Louisiana high school history, earning the right to compete for Notre Dame high school in Crowley.

Last season, Habetz helped guide the Tide to a 55-10 record and a Regional championship. Alabama was eliminated in the Super Regional round by Washington and missed the College World Series for the first time since the 2004 season.

ELSEWHERE

Director of Marketing and Promotion Daniel Hopper resigned his position during the summer. The department is being restructured and final plans had not been announced as of this writing.

Media relations found itself looking for two people, one new and one a replacement.

Media Relations Director Doug Walker had advertised for an assistant director to deal with football.

Ben Blevins, who came to Alabama's department of media relations from Duke, is returning to the Blue Devils. Blevins was in charge of media relations for softball and was involved in football sports information at Alabama. At Duke he will be involved with football and men's basketball.

Additionally, a replacement was being sought for a ticket director to replace Kristi Dyer, who moved to the Crimson Tide Foundation. ■

 TO SUBSCRIBE CALL 1-888-979-0979

VOLLEYBALL BY KIRK McNAIR

Optimistic

Talented, experienced team means high expectations

Returning all-star Crystal Hudson leads Bama volleyball

University of Alabama

Alabama Volleyball Coach Judy Green didn't have to consider the suggestion very long. "Optimistic would be a good word," she agreed. "Anxious optimism." Entering her 12th season as head coach of the Crimson Tide and 22nd year as a head volleyball coach, Green has an idea of what it takes to be successful.

Alabama volleyball has grown into a competitor for the Southeastern Conference championship and a player at the NCAA Tournament level. "After going to the NCAA Tournament the past two years, we don't have to articulate that as a goal," Green said.

Like Alabama Football Coach Nick Saban, Green works on the process and doesn't worry about the goal. She expects her team to be competitive. "We're more comfortable in that atmosphere," she said of making the NCAA field. "We're not numerically driven. We don't think in terms of having a certain record. We think of things like becoming a better team, of being accountable to one another, to making sure at the end of a match that we weren't out-worked. That process enables us to keep our composure in big matches."

That doesn't mean a volleyball coach can't dream. "We had a good season last year," Green said. "We want to continue to be in that position, competing for the SEC Championship. We'd like to win a ring. To do that you have to put forth the effort, and I think our team has worked hard.

"We coach hard, too," she said, "but we can do better. If we stay the same, the team stays the same, so we're trying to coach better."

As a measure of how anxious the coaching staff is to get started, following spring training Assistant Coach Ben Boldt (new this year from Nebraska, replacing Chris Redding who is the new head coach at North Carolina-Charlotte) started a countdown calendar to the opening day of practice. A daily staff ritual was to gather in Boldt's office and peel off a day until on-court work begins. Alabama's other assistant coach is Jill Pape-Kramer.

Last year Alabama was 17-13 overall and 12-8 in SEC competition, finishing third in the conference. Bama was a 2-3 loser to Stephen F.Austin in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

There are 11 SEC volleyball teams (Vanderbilt doesn't have a squad) and the teams play a double round robin, meaning every team plays every other team home and away. There is no SEC Tournament. Still, the league is divided into East and West divisions for volleyball.

Florida will be the overwhelming favorite to win the overall SEC championship and compete for the national title. "They are very good, solid at every position," Green said.

The Tide coach noted that every team in the SEC has closed the gap on Florida in recent years. And that's because the other 10 teams have raised the level of their play, not because the Gators have come back to the pack. Green said, "Florida is still great, but not invincible."

Although Green said the West is more wide open, "I'd think we'd be picked first." LSU is likely Bama's toughest competition in the division.

A primary reason the Crimson Tide will be picked high is that Bama returns five starters among the 10 returning letter winners. "We're returning a huge nucleus of our team," Green said. "We have experience, and most important it's experience at playing at the highest level." Included in that experience is a number of players getting international experience in the summer.

Discussion of Alabama's 2007 volleyball team usually begins with 5-11 senior Crystal Hudson of Hueytown, the Tide's only native Alabamian. Green gives an assist to Gymnastics Coach Sarah Patterson for having Hudson, who was redshirted as a freshman. "Sarah's daughter, Jessica, was playing high school volleyball and her team played against Hueytown," Green said. "Sarah called me and said 'I don't know anything about volleyball, but I know an athlete when I see one.' I went up to see Crystal and she was thrilled when I offered her a volleyball scholarship. She was an Alabama fan and she wanted to play volleyball, but most schools were recruiting

her for basketball."

A middle blocker, Hudson was selected to train with the U.S. National Team. "I think that was eye-opening for her," Green said. "Now she knows she can play after college. Her best volleyball is ahead of her."

Hudson was an All-SEC performer as a junior as one of the top offensive players in league history. "Crystal is big for our offense," Green said. "And the ones around her have grown, which complements Crystal's game."

Green said, "Crystal is the name everyone knows. Our fans and our opponents recognize her. But the great thing about this team is I think we have a lot of kids who are going to demand the attention of our opponents. I think we have a lot of weapons."

The Tide coach is pleased to have a team with relatively balanced classes. The 13-woman squad includes four seniors, two juniors, four sophomores, and three freshmen.

Green puts a lot of stock in her seniors. In addition to Hudson they include returning starters Bridget Fuentez, a 5-11 outside hitter, and Brigitte Slack, a 5-11 setter. Another senior is 5-9 setter/defensive specialist Megan Hudson, a returning co-captain.

"Each one has a different role and each one adds her flair and will determine how we improve during the season," Green said. "It's the most mature group I've had at Alabama. They are extremely focused."

Fuentez ranks with Crystal Hudson in that she was able to train with the United States Select Team this summer and played a half dozen matches against the Argentine National Team. "That should boost her confidence as she was one of only two players from East of the Mississippi chosen for the team," Green said.

Fuentez gets excellent marks from Green for her passing ("phenomenal"), blocking, defense, and improved serving. "She had a chance to play libero on the national team because she passes so well," Green said.

Green believes "Whatever kind of year Brigitte Slack has will determine the kind of year Alabama has. She's got to be like King Midas and turn things into gold. She's got to turn good passes to great and poor passes to good."

The coach said Slack is a "cognitive player who processes the game well. One thing I saw in the spring was a new level of commitment-to be in great shape and improve her game. If she is committed, she has the ability to be the best setter in the SEC."

Although not a returning starter, few rank higher in importance than Megan Hudson. "She is a great leader," Green said. "In the summer, when the girls have to work out on their own, Megan took the responsibility to get the work done. She had them playing matches three days a week during the summer, in addition to the strength and conditioning and skills work. She knows what it takes to motivate her teammates."

Hudson was co-captain last year with the Tide's lone departed starter, Rachel Green.

Green said Hudson is "the whole package. She's a good student and leader and a very competitive volleyball player who knows how to win." Hudson is a good defender and server. "We feel we have to be a better passing team and think she can help us there," Green said

Green admits that she thinks every team needs to be a better passing team. "The best teams are the best passing teams," she said. "We have improved our passing. When we do that, we can keep moving Bridget (Fuentez) around and get her to the center of the court. We want the best passer touching the ball.".

Green is very high on the Crimson Tide's smallest player. Amy Pauly, a 5-4 junior defensive specialist/libero, is "a little gym rat," Green said. "She plays with toughness. She won't let the ball touch the court if she can get to it. She needs to be more consistent in her passing and to continue to mature and be more focused on the court. She has improved her skills and now she needs to apply them in competitive situations."

The fifth returning starter is opposite hitter Elizabeth Salstrand, a 6-3 sophomore. There's plenty of competition at this spot with 6-0 sophomore Calli Johnson and 6-1 junior Lindsey Buteyn possibilities. "Liz got a tremendous amount of experience last year," Green said. "She knows what playing volleyball at a top level of competition is and at the end of spring training she was the starter."

Green said Salstrand responded to the competition. "She's hitting the ball harder," the coach said. "At 6-3 she is a presence on the net, and I like to see her being more aggressive."

Lindsey Buteyn played as a freshman in the second middle position last year. "We're looking for consistency," Green said. "We need someone who can hit for a high percentage, but not necessarily having a big offensive load. She has to play with few errors."

Green said that Buteyn is the better offensive player and that Calli Johnson is the better blocker.

"Both of them are springy athletes, both are working hard, and both want to play," Green said.

Green said that 6-0 sophomore outside hitter Brooks Webster is "hands down our most improved players. She had one of the best spring training seasons I've ever seen. She's very athletic and she learns very fast. She will be very similar to Crystal Hudson. She is a dynamic attacker. She has different shots and knows when to use them. Previously she relied on her athletic ability, and now she's evolving into a complete player. By season's end, it will be very difficult to defend us from the outside."

Jennifer Weber is a 5-6 sophomore defensive specialist. Green said, "Jen can play the role of passer and defensive sub. She has improved her serving game and she's developing in her defensive role. She got a lot of experience as a freshman. She's a hard-working, solid kid."

There are about 320 college volleyball teams, so the competition for top players in recruiting is fierce. High school volleyball in Alabama is improving rapidly and may one day provide the base for the Crimson Tide, but for now Green has to recruit nationwide. She and her staff are doing pretty well with a three-woman freshman class that was ranked among the nation's top 40. They are Lauren Martin, a 5-10 setter; Mary Catherine Aune, a 5-8 outside hitter/libero; and Alyssa Meuth, a 5-11 outside hitter. "They are all very competitive and will complement our team," Green said.

Green calls Martin a "blue collar" worker. "She's a very talented server who has played volleyball a long time," the coach said. "She will benefit from playing with good, experienced players."

Aune has played since she was 12 years old. "She can rip a jump serve and she is a fast, smooth defensive player," Green said. "She has the ability to become a great passer."

Green said Meuth is "a long, lean athlete who can play left side, right side or middle. She can hit a ball hard; mash it. She's young and we think she will blossom."

All players were enrolled for the second semester of summer school. The team was to report on August 8 and begin practice the next day.

Alabama opens the season at the Oklahoma Invitational August 24. The Tide will host the Bama Bash August 31-September 2 with Illinois State, UAB and Sacramento State ("the first time we've had a California team come to our place," Green said).

"Our non-conference schedule is very challenging," Green said. "We'll play seven teams that made the NCAA Tournament last year. It's an opportunity to pick up some quality wins early, and it will make us better prepared for the SEC season."

Last year Alabama nearly doubled average attendance for home matches, which are played in the CAVE, the auxiliary gym at the South end of Coleman Coliseum. This year for the first time women's volleyball is selling season tickets. ■

Help On The Way

Newcomers figure prominently in 2007 soccer

Alabama soccer head coach Don Staley doesn't want to revisit what happened last season, and no Alabama fan would want to either. But what happened in 2006, when Alabama suffered a litany of injuries before and during the season, gave rise to a new plan for Staley and his squad for 2007.

"We actually have 39 players reporting to preseason camp," Staley, who is in his 14th season at Alabama with a record of 130-128-11 and 315-247-37 overall, said. "From a Title IX standpoint it's a great thing for our athletics department because it helps us in many areas. Number two, it gives athletes a fair opportunity to make our program. We've got several in-state kids coming in."

Last season the Tide suffered seven season ending injuries, which put them behind at the start of each game due to a lack of depth. At the end of the season the Tide was playing with only five substitutes available and a lot of players playing out of position. Things got so desperate that goalkeepers were playing out in the field by the end of the 5-14 season.

"Some years you get them," Staley said, "and we had everything from broken noses to blood clots, to ACLs and MCLs. Hopefully we'll guard against that this year."

To do so, Staley added the largest incoming class in school history. Alabama will have 23 new players entering fall camp, including seven scholarship players and 16 invited walk-ons.

"Those who came out last year and saw us limp through the season, that won't happen this year. I think you're going to see the excitement back in Alabama soccer," Staley said. "Others might say less is more. Well, less wasn't more for us last year. I think strength in numbers is going to be what we need."

In addition to the 23 new players, Staley also has a new addition to his staff. New Assistant Coach Nikki Smith was a former standout player for the Tide from 1994-97. Smith, then Nikki Kubiszyn, led the Tide to SEC Western Division titles in 1995 and 1997. The standout midfielder and sweeper was selected to the All-SEC Tournament team in 1994, was the team's defensive MVP for three consecutive years from 1995-97 and was the 1997 team captain. She was the head coach at Birmingham Southern last season.

Staley, Smith and Tide assistant Jeremy Hampton expect to have their hands full in organizing such a large group of players and determining where all the pieces fit.

"The theme has to be 'team first, understand your role,'" Staley said. "You want the kids to feel like they can give input, but when we have to get things done this is the way it's going to be. I think the hardest thing is going to be for everyone to know their role. And I'll expect those captains to step up and really lead. It's not a right to play. It's an honor."

Team Captains Haley MacDonald and Jordan O'Banion are the top two returnees. Alabama returns 15 players in all who saw significant action last season, including returning starters include Jamie Zimmerman, Kailey Corken, Jessica Deegan, Cara Kelly, Kara Gudmens, Coleen Posey, Susie Beard and Natalie Kohn.

"I'm expecting big things out of this senior class, first and foremost from a leadership standpoint," Staley said. "I'm not so sure that we're going to be latent with superstars on our team as much as we are going be a blue collar group. I believe the leadership qualities of our seniors that aren't going to show up on a stat sheet are going to be the catalyst for our success this year."

Expected to be key member of the incoming class are sisters Justine and Danielle Bernier and Victoria Fredricks, a midfielder from Huntsville.

Justine Bernier is a goalkeeper from Ontario, Canada, and was a member of the under-18 Canadian National Team and the Toronto Lady Lynx in the W-League, where she was the 2006 Goalkeeper of the Year and first team All-W-League. The W-League is a mixture of professional and amateur athletes and is considered the highest-ranking league available for women in Canada.

"The accolades that she's got on her resume are legitimate," Staley said. "It's going to make for a real competitive preseason. We gave up a lot of goals last year and from a defensive perspective we've got to tighten up our man-marking and our schemes, but we've also got to have a true leader in between the pipes."

Danielle Bernier is a junior transfer from Canisius College in Buffalo. With the Golden Griffins she was a two-year starter at sweeper, 2005 Rookie of the Year and 2006

MAAC All-Academic Team.

"Losing your sweeper before the season ever started really hurt us," Staley said. "The fact that they will have commonality back they're because they're sisters should help."

Victoria Fredricks is a Midfielder from Huntsville High School, where she was the Gatorade High School Player of the Year for the state of Alabama.

"She has some jets," Staley said. "I think she's going to be dynamite. She's in that same kind of realm as (World Cup and North Carolina star) Kat Reddick," who is from Birmingham.

Another newcomers is Elizabeth Davis, daughter of former Crimson Tide football player Ricky Davis.

In the spring season the Tide was undefeated with a 3-0-3 record, even as returning players continued to return from injury.

"This group has really endeared itself to me because of its resiliency, and they are closer than they have been in years," Staley said.

And with all the help on the way, this year's challenge will be to identify the best combination of players and style for the opening road series against Robert Morris and Duquesne in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"Your system and style will be predicated around what those players are capable of," Staley said. "Whether it's grind-it-out, hard nosed, direct, aerial re-start type soccer, or whether we blend with speed, skill play more wide open and are possession oriented, Alabama soccer will step on the field with a bounce in our step this year and everyone going on that first road trip will expect to win." ■

Haley McDonald

University of Alabama

Different Routes To Same Goal

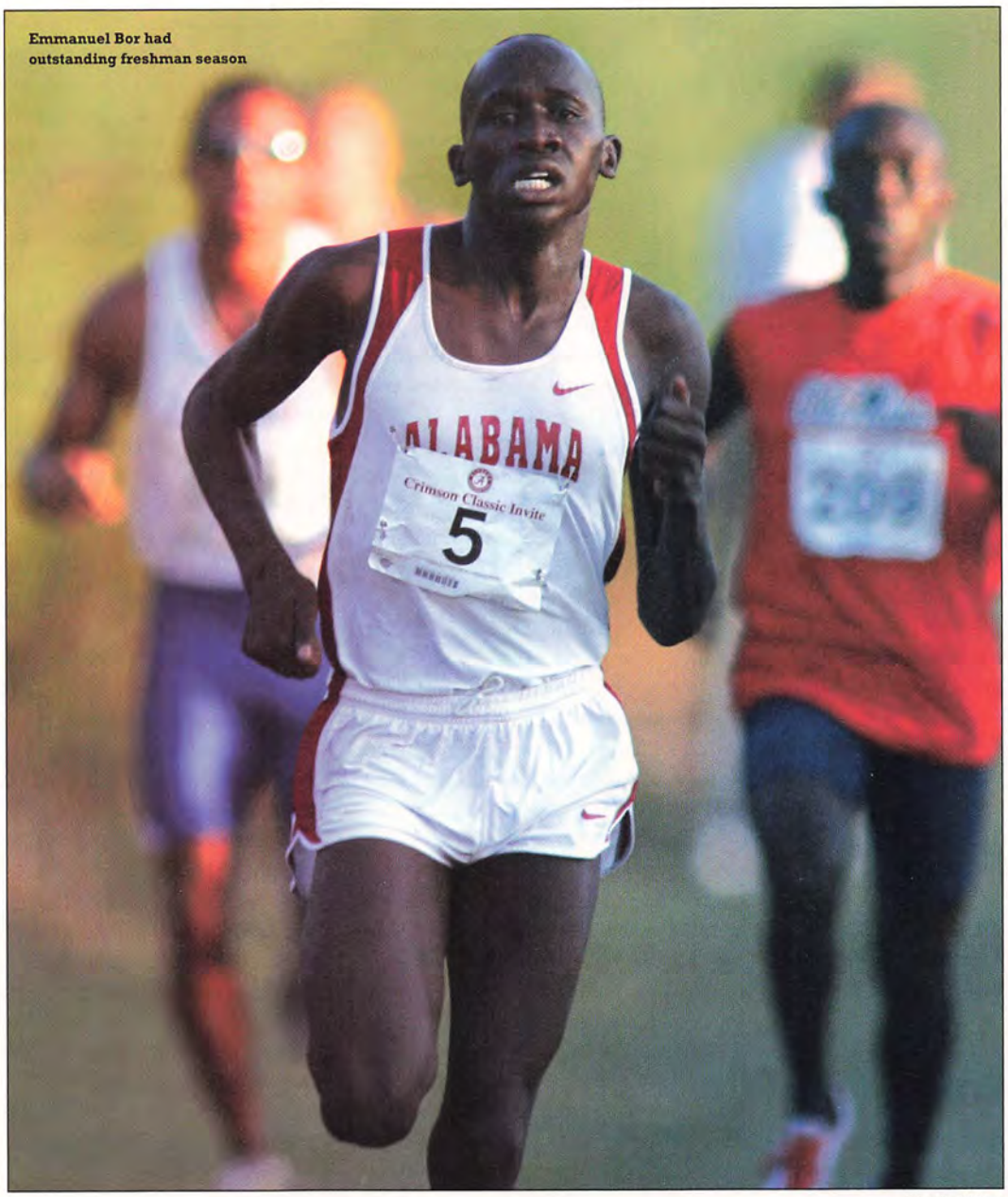
Experienced men, rebuilding women have quality

The Crimson Tide men's and women's cross country teams are approaching the coming season from different starting points owing to vastly different levels of experience. But both Bama squads have the same goal of peaking at the right time and giving Alabama a championship season to remember.

For Men's Coach Joe Walker, now in his eighth season leading Alabama's distance program, experience is everything. He returns nearly every performer from last year's squad that made its second consecutive NCAA Championship appearance.

Sophomore Emmanuel Bor was fast out of the gate last year as a rookie, twice earning Southeastern Conference Cross Country Athlete of the Week honors and winning his first two races. Despite being a little banged up toward the end of the season, Bor still earned All-SEC and All-South Region honors and was the Tide's second finisher at the NCAA Championships.

Junior Augustus Maiyo, a two-time All-SEC and All-Region and an All-America on the track, led the Tide at the NCAA South



Emmanuel Bor had outstanding freshman season

University of Alabama

Junior Katie Davis missed 2006 season with injury

University of Alabama

Region Championships, taking third, and the NCAA Championships, taking 38th. Abraham Kutingala, two-time All-SEC and All-South Region, was the Tide's top finisher at the prestigious Chile Pepper Festival and the SEC Championships. Titus Koeh, a junior, is another All-SEC and All-Region returner for the Tide.

The Tide will have a hole to fill after losing Alex Korir, a two-time All-SEC and three-time All-South Region performer to graduation. Korir was the Tide's third finisher at the NCAA Championships and figured in its scoring five all last season.

"I'm really excited about this group," Walker said. "We've got a really good core of guys who have not only been there before and know what it takes, but they've had a lot of success at this level."

In addition to Bor, Koeh, Kutingala and Maiyo, the Tide returns sophomores G.J. Hudgens, Alex Seiver and Cameron Sherrill, junior Brandon Stephens and seniors Paul Guevara and Matt Staggs.

Overall, this may be the deepest team that Walker has coached at Alabama with four All-SEC and All-Region runners. In addition to that crew, Alabama adds Joey Purpura who ran on Virginia Intermont College's NAIA National Championship squad last season before it dropped its program. Purpura will be a sophomore this season and eligible to compete.

"We have the basis of a team that can compete for the region title and can do well at nationals," Walker said. "You obviously need to have a healthy season, which we didn't have last year, which was a huge factor in how we finished."

The men start the season off with the UT-Chattanooga Opener September 7, and follow that up with the Crimson Classic on the Tide's home course at the old Harry Pritchett Golf Course on September 14. Since the golf course closing a few years ago, this is one of the premier cross country venues in the South.

The NCAA Regional Meet on November 10 is at Florida this year. While Gainesville will undoubtedly put on a fine meet, the probable weather conditions-that is to say hot, hot, hot, even in November-could give the South Region teams a tough race only to be followed up by the national championships nine days later in Indiana.

"At SECs it should be Arkansas, Florida and us again this season," Walker said. "I think we have a team, at least up top, that could line up well with Arkansas. It's just a matter of grabbing the opportunity if it presents itself. In the South Region it's the same teams up at the top, us, Florida, Florida State and probably Tennessee. And then at nationals it's who can bounce back from a tough region meet and handle the course."

While the men's squad is brimming with experience at the highest levels, the Alabama women's team, under the direction of Coach Randy Hasenbank, is in a rebuilding phase with a squad that is made up of six freshmen, four sophomores and four juniors. Hasenbank, in his second year as the Tide's mentor, will rely on a mixture of youth and experience to make up the top five.

Lost to graduation are four members of last year's top six, including 2006 NCAA Championship participant Julia Hicks. Leading the Tide's youth movement will be junior Katie Davis, who sat out last season due to injuries. As a freshman in 2005, she was among the Tide's scoring five all season.

"Katie is one of the veterans who we really need to take a big step forward this season and take a leadership role," Hasenbank said. "For us to be successful this season, she needs to be an impact performer."

The Tide also will be dependent on sophomore Ashley Ard and junior Farrah Stewart. Both women were regulars in the Tide's scoring five a year ago, finishing third and fourth respectively for the Tide at the NCAA South Regional Championships.

Alabama will look for juniors Whitney Taylor and Jen Gray and sophomore Rue Chitwood to step and make an impact on the Tide's lineup this season. Sophomores Anna Day and Rachel Wilson will add depth and should continue to develop as the season goes on.

"Ashley, Farrah, Whitney and Jen have all benefited from competing in the Southeastern Conference and training at this level," Hasenbank said. "I look forward to seeing what they can do this season."

Among the Tide's six freshmen, Jordan Harper, Haley Moody and Kelsie Slater all have a chance to see action among the Tide's top five or six competitors as rookies. Harper was one of the top runners in the state of Alabama last year while Moody earned a berth at the Nike Indoor National Championships, no small feat in itself. Slater will see action on the track in the steeple chase and the 1500-meter race and should be solid in cross country.

"Our freshmen, especially Jordan, Haley and Kelsie, have a great opportunity to come in and really help us out," Hasenbank said. "If they come in ready to work and have a great attitude from the word go, and I think all these young ladies have that mentality, they can be very successful this season."

The Tide's other rookies, Meghan Hawkins, Jenna Hughes and Megan Williams are on the developmental track and will benefit greatly from a year of collegiate training and competition.

As is traditionally the case, The Tide women will open the season in the Belmont Opener in Nashville August 31, a 4K race that will give them a good place to build from. Hasenbank and company will then race every other weekend, following up the opener with a 5K race on its home course in the Crimson Classic September 14.

"This is a schedule that will allow us to build through the season and hopefully peak at the right time for a strong postseason," Hasenbank said. ■

Crimson Tide Fall Rosters

2007 Alabama: Soccer Roster

Name	CL	Exp	Ht	Pos	Hometown
Jessie Allaway	Fr	HS	5-9	D	Tuscaloosa
Maggie Bailey	Fr	HS	5-4	D	Birmingham
Sydney Barker	Fr	HS	5-6	M/D	Cincinnati, Ohio
Susie Beard	Jr	2L	5-4	M/F	Bowling Green, Ky.
Dani Bernier	Jr	TR	5-9	D	Oakville, Ont.
Justine Bernier	Fr	HS	5-10	GK	Oakville, Ont.
Alex Butera	So	1L	5-7	F	Orlando, Fla.
Annie B. Collins	So	1L	5-4	F/M	Mountain Brook
Kailey Corken	So	1L	5-7	M	Cincinnati, Ohio
Jessica Deegan	Jr	2L	5-8	F/M	Centreville, Va.
Stephanie Dixon	Fr	HS	5-7	D	Brentwood, Tenn.
Victoria Fredrick	Fr	HS	5-7	M	Huntsville
Sydney Gass	Fr	HS	5-8	M	Newport, Maine
Kara Gudmens	Jr	2L	5-9	GK	Cincinnati, Ohio
Khristinia Guggenberger	Fr	HS	5-4	F	Tuscaloosa
Hailey Hull	Fr	HS	5-8	D	Brentwood, Tenn.
Kelly King	Fr	HS	5-4	F	Lake Norman, NC
Kelsey King	So	1L	5-8	F	Kingwood, Texas
Cara Kelly	Jr	2L	5-3	M	Cincinnati, Ohio
Natalie Kohn	Sr	3L	5-6	D	Gurnee, Ill.
Karen Lansden	So	1L	5-9	GK	Houston, Texas
Grace Lawson	Fr	RS	5-7	F	Hendersonville, Tenn.
Hayley MacDonald	Sr	3L	5-4	M/D	St. Catharine's, Ont.
Lauren Mann	Fr	HS	5-2	F	Huntsville
Carly Mygrants	Fr	HS	5-8	M	Dayton, Ohio
Jordan O'Banion	Sr	3L	5-7	F	Carmel, Ind.
Brianna Ondriezek	Fr	HS	5-3	F	Southington, Conn.
Callie O'Steen	Fr	HS	5-7	D	Birmingham
Jenna Pawelek	Fr	HS	5-6	S	Spring, Texas
Rosaly Petriello	Fr	RS	5-6	M	St. Catharine's, Ont.
Callie Pike	Jr	2L	5-3	M	Tuscaloosa
Colleen Posey	Jr	2L	5-7	D	Cincinnati, Ohio
Brooke Rodgers	Fr	HS	5-5	F	Cincinnati, Ohio
Kendel Selvery	Fr	HS	XX	D	Collierville, Tenn.
Juliana Spivey	Fr	HS	5-7	GK	Atlanta, Ga.
Molly Wittig	Fr	HS	5-0	M	Columbia, S.C.
Jamie Zimmerman	Jr	1L	5-3	M/F	White Hall, Md.

Head Coach: Don Staley
Assistants: Jeremy Hampton and Nikki Smith

2007 Alabama: Women's Cross Country Roster

Name	Class	Hometown
Ashley Ard	Soph	Robertsdale
Rue Chitwood	Soph	Tifton, Ga.
Katie Davis	Junior	Lawrenceville, Ga.
Anna Day	Soph	Marietta, Ga.
Jen Gray	Junior	Camp Hill, Pa.
Jordan Harper	Frosh	Birmingham
Meghan Hawkins	Frosh	Decatur
Jenna Hughes	Frosh	Powder Springs, Ga.
Haley Moody	Frosh	Morristown, Tenn.
Kelsie Slater	Frosh	Grimsby, Ontario
Farrah Stewart	Junior	Jay, Fla.
Whitney Taylor	Junior	Moores Hill, Ind.
Rachel White	Soph	Marietta, Ga.
Megan Williams	Frosh	Oxford

Head Coach: Randy Hasenbank

2007 Alabama: Men's Cross Country Roster

Name	Class	Hometown
Emmanuel Bor	Soph	Eldoret, Kenya
Paul Guevara	Senior	Georgetown, Texas
G.J. Hudgens	Soph	Nashville, Tenn.
Titus Koeh	Junior	Kericho, Kenya
Abraham Kutingala	Junior	Narok, Kenya
Augustus Maiyo	Junior	Kapsabet, Kenya
Joey Purpura	Soph	Bristol, Va.
Alex Seiver	Soph	Rock Island, Ill.
Cameron Sherrill	Soph	Meridian, Miss.
Matt Staggs	Senior	Fresno, Calif.
Brandon Stephens	Junior	Atlanta

Head Coach: Joe Walker

2007 Alabama: Volleyball Roster

Name	Pos	Ht	Cl	Hometown
Mary Catherine Aune	OH/DS	5-8	Fr	Austin, Texas
Lindsey Buteyn	MB	6-1	Jr	Waupun, Wisc.
Bridget Fuentez	OH	5-11	Sr	Tomball, Texas
Crystal Hudson	MB	5-11	Sr	Hueytown
Megan Hudson	S/DS	5-9	Sr	St. Louis, Mo.
Calli Johnson	MB/OH	6-0	So	Dubuque, Iowa
Lauren Martin	S	5-10	Fr	Sebastopol, Calif.
Amy Pauly	DS/L	5-4	Jr	Burr Ridge, Ill.
Elizabeth Salstrand	Opp	6-3	So	Rockford, Ill.
Brigitte Slack	S	5-11	Sr	Ft. Wayne, Ind.
Jennifer Weber	DS/L	5-6	So	Wheaton, Ill.
Brooks Webster	OH	6-0	So	Baltimore, Md.

Head Coach: Judy Green
Assistants: Jill Pape-Kramer and Ben Boldt

Prep Prospects

A look at the big men in the state of Alabama

Every football team needs big men. That includes offensive and defensive linemen, tight ends, and linebackers. The University of Alabama has indicated that under Coach Nick Saban it is going to concentrate on landing the top players from within the state of Alabama.

Here is a look at some of the top big men who are upcoming high school seniors and who may be on Alabama's recruiting radar for the February 6, 2008, signing class.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

The class of 2008 is producing one of the most solid groups of big men the state has seen in a while. Several are guard/center type prospects, but the majority of top players are the guys who will block the outside edges once they reach the next level.

Three of the top six in-state offensive tackles are members of the Scout.com Southeast Hot 150 including one National Hot 100 prospect. The state's top two interior offensive linemen have made out-of-state commitments with Ben Jones (Centreville Bibb County) and Jonathan Owens (Blountsville Susan Moore) committing to Georgia.

Alabama has lifted the grayshirt from guard/center William Vlachos of Mountain Brook. He will be with the 2007 team as a freshman. Originally he had been expected to delay entry until January, 2008.

The past two recruiting classes have helped stockpile the guard and center spots, which means the emphasis among offensive line prospects for Alabama is the tackle position. The top linemen in the state considering (and being considered by) Alabama are tackles. Here is a look at some of them:

Tyler Love, 6-7, 285, Mountain Brook, is a Scout.com National Hot 100 offensive tackle recruited by schools all across the country. Alabama looks good for his signature going into the Fall, but he lists the Tide equal with Florida, Florida State, Georgia, LSU and Oklahoma. Texas also is starting to make a strong push.

Love is definitely a player who could make an immediate impact on the offensive line. He is a huge player with NFL potential, has a great frame, technique and knowledge of the game. He took several unofficial visits to Tuscaloosa throughout the spring and summer.

Love said, "The thing that really stands out to me about Alabama is their atmosphere, how nice their facilities are and how the coaches are running things. I have grown up an Alabama fan."

Scout.com

Antoine McClain, 6-6, 313, Anniston, a Scout.com four-star offensive tackle, was a standout performer at the Scout.com Southeast Elite camp in Atlanta with his stock soaring. McClain has scholarship offers from schools across the Southeast, but Alabama and Auburn are the two to likely battle for his signature.

McClain has excellent footwork. He demonstrated tremendous athleticism and strength at the Scout.com camp. McClain camped in Tuscaloosa and worked with Alabama offensive line coach Joe Pendry.

"It was straight. It was a lot of work," McClain said. "Coach Pendry has a lot of advice. I liked that. I feel at home at Alabama."

John Michael Boswell, 6-6, 300, will be making a short trip to college. The Alabama commitment is from Tuscaloosa County High in Northport. The Scout.com three-star offensive tackle had an outstanding performance at the Scout.com Southeast Elite camp. He has a lot of strength and power to go along with his quickness off the ball. Boswell is notably one of the best offensive line products to come out of the Tuscaloosa area in a while. He has not visited any other schools since his commitment.

"I'm solid to Alabama," Boswell said. "I've thought about everything, and Alabama is the best fit for me. The coaches are great, and it's the best place I can be."

Teavis Durgin, 6-6, 305, Daphne, a Scout.com three-star offensive tackle, is another mammoth lineman who will sign with a major university. One thing that separates Durgin is his drive. He never gives up on plays until the whistle is blown and always full speed. Durgin possesses a lot of power, quickness and agility. He has earned scholarship offers from LSU, Tennessee and West Virginia. He is receiving interest from numerous other schools including Alabama, Auburn and Florida. He visited Tuscaloosa in the spring and had a great visit.

"I am starting to be a fan of Alabama," Durgin said. "I have really been neutral all my life and never really had a favorite team. I have visited Alabama a couple of times, and I really like the campus."

T.J. Barnes, 6-7, 320, Enterprise, a Scout.com three-star offensive tackle, is a monster lineman who is starting to collect scholarship offers from the likes of Alabama, Auburn

Antoine McClain

John Michael Bowswell

Greg McGrue

William Green

Glenn Harbin

and Georgia Tech. Barnes moved to Enterprise from Florida in 2006 and spent a lot of time on the defensive line. Barnes is explosive, has great footwork and is athletic for a player his size. He visited Tuscaloosa in the spring and was very impressed with Alabama Coach Nick Saban.

Barnes said, "The visit to Alabama was great. They knew who I was before I said my name. They are good coaches. I like everything about them. Nick Saban is a good coach."

Greg McGrue, 6-8, 360, Huffman a Scout.com two-star offensive tackle, gets the honor as the biggest lineman in the state. McGrue was a pleasant surprise at the ScoutSouth.com Combine at Hoover High in the spring, and the analysis of his performance caught the attention of college coaches. McGrue reports scholarship offers from Auburn, Georgia, Purdue and Southern Miss. He is receiving strong interest from Alabama and LSU. He brings pure strength and power with his massive frame. Alabama commitment Undra Billingsley had his hands full with McGrue at the combine in the one-on-one drills.

Other in-state lineman to keep an eye on include Peters Drey (Mobile McGill-Toolen), Eric Jones (Hoover Spain Park), Jake Naylor (Millbrook Stanhope Elmore), Matt Jones (Hoover), Josh Tatum (Marbury), Charlie Sanford (Cullman), Jeff Benson (Spain Park) and Eric Allen (Daphne).

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

The state is stacked from top to bottom with defensive lineman with the majority more hybrid-type instead of the mammoth size. Some defensive ends may step back and play linebacker at the next level. Schools throughout the country utilize the "jack" linebacker position, and Alabama coaches see players within the state who fit the criteria for the spot.

Alabama has secured commitments from four defensive lineman, all in-state, for the class of 2008. In addition to those four, the Tide looks good to land the top two defensive linemen in the state. Looking at defensive linemen:

William Green, 6-4, 208, Hoover Spain Park, a Scout.com four-star, is the top ranked defensive end in Alabama and ranked 13th nationally. Green fits the mold of a hybrid-type defender and has one of the quickest first steps of any prospect in the country. He flies to the ball with a constant motor. Green's speed and acceleration make him one of the country's most sought after recruits.

He has received scholarship offers from coast-to-coast and narrowed his choices to Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Florida State, Georgia Tech, LSU and Oklahoma. Alabama is a very strong contender, but Florida and FSU are close. Green has taken several unofficial visits to Tuscaloosa, and he grew up a fan of the Tide.

"I like the way Coach Saban is running things down there," Green said. "The program is heading in the right direction. It's really hard to say no to them."

Glenn Harbin, 6-6, 228, Mobile McGill-Toolen, a Scout.com four-star defensive end, is ranked among the top 10 prospects in Alabama. Harbin watched his stock skyrocket after the U.S. Army All-American combine in San Antonio, Texas in January. Alabama, Auburn, LSU and Oklahoma are some of the schools in contention for his signature. Harbin is not naming favorites, but he grew up a Tide fan. He has the height, speed and quickness as an elite college defender. Harbin is also an outstanding baseball prospect. He took an unofficial visit to Tuscaloosa during the spring.

"I really like Alabama," Harbin said. "They are going to have a good upcoming program."

Courtney Upshaw, 6-2, 228, Eufaula, has committed to Bama. The Scout.com four-star defensive end, is one of the most ferocious prospects in the state with his blend of size, speed and tackling ability. He is a big-time hitter on defense and looks the part of a future All-SEC linebacker.

Upshaw grew up an Alabama fan, and his decision was easy. "I just always knew I wanted to go Alabama growing up," he said.

He took a visit to Auburn following his commitment to the Alabama and returned to Tuscaloosa and updated his status. "I had a good time at Auburn, but that doesn't mean I am going there. I feel good about my commitment to Alabama. I am a solid commitment," Upshaw said.

Michael Williams, 6-6, 240, Reform Pickens County, a Scout.com four-star defensive end, is another solid commitment for Alabama. The first verbal of the 2008 class is a monster athlete who plays both tight end and defensive end for his high school team, but he will stick to defense once he arrives in Tuscaloosa.

Williams is tough to block and is quick to get to the backfield. The Scout.com Southeast Hot 150 member was in Tuscaloosa for Alabama's A-Day game. He was impressed with the 92,000 who showed up for the spring game. He said, "Oh yeah this is where I want to be. This is where I want to play."

Brandon Lewis, 6-4, 260, Pleasant Grove, a Scout.com three-star defensive end, is another big commitment for Alabama. Lewis already has great size and could add 20 pounds to his frame before arriving in Tuscaloosa. He has great athleticism, backside pursuit and pass rushing ability. Lewis has a quick first step off the line of scrimmage, and his motor is always running. He gave an early verbal and has not considered any other schools since his decision.

"I have wanted to play there my whole life," Lewis said.

"My uncle, Michael Myers, played there. He was an All-America defensive tackle for Alabama. I have always wanted to play for them."

Undra Billingsley, 6-3, 260, Birmingham Woodlawn, a Scout.com three-star defensive end, ranks as one of the top 20 players in the state. Billingsley is superb on both sides of the ball as a tight end and defensive end. He is very athletic, extremely quick and put on a great performance at the ScoutSouth.com combine in Hoover. Billingsley chose Alabama over Auburn, Clemson, Ole Miss and Tennessee.

"Out of all the colleges I've been to they have the most welcoming staff," Billingsley said. "Coach Saban before practice said academics were first. He said he didn't want to make me just a great football player, but push me hard for academics. I really liked that."

JoMarcus Savage, 6-foor-2, 260, Huntsville J.O. Johnson, a Scout.com three-star defensive tackle, arrived on the recruiting radar with his spectacular performances at summer camps. Savage has received scholarship offers from Auburn, Southern Miss and Tennessee. Alabama, Clemson, Louisville and South Carolina are all expressing interest. He does not list favorites.

Willie Bohannon 6-3, 240, Pritchard Blount, a Scout.com three-star defensive end, was a solid performer at the Scout.com Southeast Elite camp in Atlanta and also camped at Alabama. He holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana-Lafayette and Troy.

"I really like Alabama a lot, but I'm gonna wait a little bit longer," Bohannon said. "They are definitely one of my favorites."

Other in-state defensive linemen to watch are Demarkus Underwood(Tuscumbia Deshler), James Brown (Tuscaloosa Central), Scott Byrd (Mobile St. Paul's), Kynjee Cotton (Daphne), Nakia Dennis (Sweet Water), Lavanda Powe (Silas Southern Choctaw), Adam Gillespie (Decatur), David Green (Chatom Washington County), Derrick Lykes (Clant Chilton County), Alex Davis (Birmingham Briarwood Christian), Cameron Henderson (Birmingham Shades Valley) and Daniel Forester (Briarwood Christian).

LINEBACKERS

The state has a lack of top prospects at the linebacker position, but the class of 2007 did have two four-star players in Rolando McClain (Alabama signee) and Eltoro Freeman (Auburn). We take a look at a couple of in-state playmakers who have offers from Alabama and a keen interest in the Tide program.

Jerrell Harris, 6-3, 215, Gadsden City, is one of the most sought after recruits in the country and ranks as a Scout.com four-star weakside linebacker. He holds scholarship offers from across the country including Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, Florida, Florida State, Miami, Michigan and USC. Harris has been in Tuscaloosa for several unofficial visits.

"It was a lot like the other trips that I've taken there," Harris said after a summer visit. "I got a chance to hang around some of the coaches and watch camp, but I didn't stay too long. I like that they have a lot of juniors and seniors at linebacker, so that would give me a chance to play early and maybe even start."

Harris is ranked as the third best prospect in the state behind wide receiver Julio Jones (Foley) and safety Dee Finley (Auburn). Harris is a tremendous athlete who has unlimited potential. Harris has not named his final list of favorites, but a few schools who will likely remain in the hunt for his signature include Alabama, Auburn, Georgia Tech, Florida, Tennessee and USC.

Jacoby Thomas, 6--0, 205, Mobile Murphy, a Scout.com three-star weakside linebacker, is one of the hardest hitting prospects in the South. He had a big junior campaign recording 125 tackles, three interceptions and 15 tackles for loss. Thomas reports scholarship offers from Alabama, Purdue and South Carolina, with interest coming from LSU and Auburn. He visited Tuscaloosa for the A-Day game.

"The visit to Alabama went great," Thomas said. "I love the atmosphere there. I feel like it's a place I could be. They have a good learning environment, and the whole nine yards. I just love it. I thought it was a pretty good game. I liked seeing Coach Saban out on the field and watching the way he coached. I loved the intensity of the players."

Other in-state linebackers who could emerge as prospects include Garrett Armstrong (Hoover), Hugh Spencer (Tuscaloosa Paul Bryant), Martez Patterson (Prichard Vigor), Jamie Womack (Ozark), Adrien Cole (McGill-Toolen), Lavertis Towns (Dora), Johnny Thompson (Valley of Fairfax), Spencer Pybus (Dothan Northview), LeManski Ware (Lanett), Terrell Jackson (Prattville) and Korey Suggs (Russellville).

TIGHT END

It's a good year to have a team stocked with young tight ends, as is the case at Alabama. The state is short of senior tight end prospects this year.

Kendrick Cook, 6-3, 230, Attalla Etowah, has received several scholarship offers including Mississippi State, Tulane and UAB. He is receiving interest from Alabama, Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt. Cook was named Class 5A first team All-State for his junior performance.

Ken Adams, 6-4, 218, Enterprise, is recruited as both a tight end and wide receiver. Adams is a great pass catcher as well as a terrific blocker. He is receiving interest from several schools including Alabama, Auburn, Louisville and Mississippi State.

Other potential in-state tight end prospects are Kedric Murry (Pleasant Grove) and Troy Sutherland (Madison Bob Jones). ■

FOOTBALL HOT LIST

Alabama' already has a handful of "commitments," upcoming prospects who say they will sign with the Crimson Tide. Although commitments are not binding, they almost always result in the player signing with the school on the first Wednesday in February, which will be February 6, 2008. Here is a list compiled by 'BAMA of those reportedly linked to Alabama.

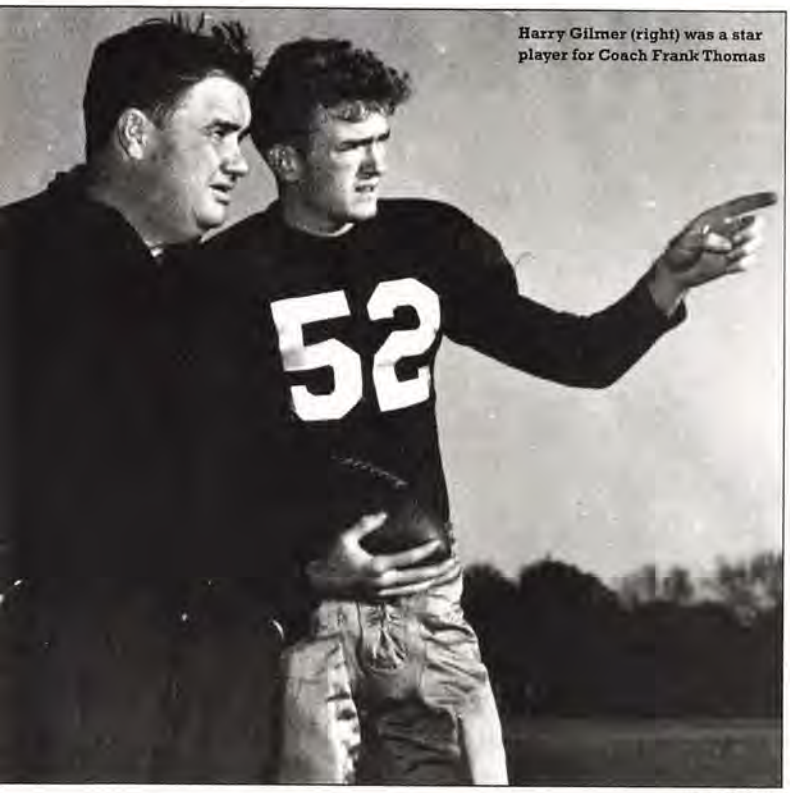
Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Michael Abernathy	FB	5-11	235	4.5	Russellville
Ken Adams	TE	6-5	215	N/A	Enterprise
Justin Albert	RB	5-8	170	4.45	Prattville
T.J. Barnes	OT	6-6	320	N/A	Enterprise
Mark Barron	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Andre Berry	WR	6-3	195	N/A	Tarrant
*Undra Billingsley	TE	6-3	245	N/A	Birmingham (Woodlawn)
Devonta Bolton	WR	6-4	210	4.5	Norcross, Ga.
*John Michael Boswell	OL	6-5	290	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Tuscaloosa County)
Deandre Brown	WR	6-6	225	4.5	Ocean Springs, Miss.
James Brown	DT	6-1	285	N/A	Cottondale (Paul W. Bryant)
Justin Brown	WR	5-9	152	N/A	Athens
T.J. Bryant	CB	6-0	175	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Lincoln)
Jarrett Burns	QB	6-3	185	N/A	Huntsville (Lee)
Ronald Byrd	OT	6-5	246	5.29	Hogansville, Ga. (Callaway)
Scott Byrd	DT	6-2	250	4.9	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Kendrick Cook	TE	6-3	230	N/A	Attalla (Etowah)
Alex Davis	DE	6-3	236	4.7	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Peters Drey	OT	6-5	280	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
Teavis Durgin	OT	6-6	295	N/A	Daphne
Daniel Forester	DE	6-4	240	N/A	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
LaFrazier Frost	CB	5-10	175	N/A	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
Matthew Gordon	WR	6-0	185	4.55	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Robby Green	CB	6-0	180	4.4	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)
William Green	DE	6-5	208	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Cordian Hagans	DT	6-5	265	N/A	Duluth, Ga. (Northview)
Devon Hairston	S	6-1	175	N/A	Enterprise
Glenn Harbin	DE	6-5	230	N/A	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
Templeton Hardy	DT	6-4	280	N/A	Sardis, Miss. (North Panola)
Jarrell Harris	LB	6-3	208	4.5	Gadsden (Gadsden City)
Chris Hood	QB	6-1	190	N/A	Birmingham (Huffman)
Destin Hood	WR	6-2	182	4.5	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Reggie Hunt	RB	5-8	180	4.4	Daphne
David Isabelle	QB	6-3	180	N/A	Huntsville (Johnson)
Star Jackson	QB	6-3	185	N/A	Lake Worth, Fla.
Terrell Jackson	LB	6-1	190	N/A	Prattville
Josh Jarboe	WR	6-3	195	4.45	Ellenwood, Ga. (Cedar Grove)
Eric Jones	OT	6-6	275	N/A	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Julio Jones	WR	6-4	212	4.5	Foley
Anthony Landrum	RB	6-1	205	4.6	Sweet Water
*Brandon Lewis	DE	6-3	260	N/A	Pleasant Grove
Josh Looney	OT	6-3	312	N/A	Lake Worth, Fla.
Tyler Love	OL	6-7	270	N/A	Birmingham (Mountain Brook)
Jon Major	LB	6-4	225	4.6	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)
*Ivan Matchett	RB	5-10	205	4.6	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Antoine McClain	OT	6-6	313	N/A	Anniston

Name	Pos.	Hgt.	Wgt.	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Greg McGrue	OT	6-8	350	5.4	Birmingham (Huffman)
Caleb Mitchell	CB	6-0	175	4.4	Russellville
Dekendrick Moncrief	WR	6-0	175	N/A	Prattville
*Wesley Neighbors	S	6-2	195	4.55	Huntsville
Morgan Ogilvie	QB	6-1	185	4.7	Birmingham (Mountain Brook)
Davin Palmer	RB	5-7	160	4.45	Chelsea
Quinton Pierce	WR	6-2	185	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)
DaMario Pippen	RB	5-10	185	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
Lavanda Powe	DT	6-5	225	N/A	Silas (Southern Choctaw)
*Jermaine Preyear	RB	5-11	195	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)
Spencer Pybus	LB	6-1	200	N/A	Dothan (Northview)
Darrell Reynolds	CB	5-10	180	N/A	Brundidge (Pike County)
Jeremy Rice	RB	5-8	185	4.54	Madison (Madison Academy)
Chaz Rogers	QB	6-2	200	N/A	Guntersville
Justin Rogers	RB	5-11	180	4.5	Vestavia Hills
Quinn Sanford	OL	6-3	295	N/A	Batesville, Miss. (South Panola)
Jomarcus Savage	DT	6-2	260	N/A	Huntsville (Johnson)
Burton Scott	WR	5-10	190	4.4	Prichard (Vigor)
James Searcy	DE	6-2	220	4.65	Newnan, Ga. (Northgate)
Darrell Simmons	S	6-4	201	4.65	College Park, Ga. (Banneker)
*Brad Smelley	WR	6-3	215	N/A	Tuscaloosa (American Christian)
*Corey Smith	K	6-0	190	N/A	Bunker Hill, W. Va. (Musselman)
P.J. Smith	S	6-4	190	4.5	River Ridge, La. (John Curtis)
David Spurlock	DL	6-5	290	N/A	Murfreesboro, Tenn. (Riverdale)
Korey Suggs	LB	6-1	210	N/A	Russellville
Josh Tatum	OG	6-5	295	N/A	Marbury
Demetrius Thomas	RB	6-1	200	N/A	Theodore
Jacoby Thomas	LB	N/A	N/A	N/A	Mobile (Murphy)
Johnny Thompson	LB	6-1	205	4.6	Fairfax (Valley)
Lavertis Towns	LB	6-2	210	N/A	Dora
Barrett Trotter	QB	6-2	195	4.6	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Marcus Udell	CB	5-11	180	N/A	Tallahassee, Fla. (Copiah-Lincoln JC)
Demarkus Underwood	DT	6-5	295	N/A	Leighton (Colbert County)
*Courtney Upshaw	DE	6-2	225	N/A	Eufaula
Lemanski Ware	LB	6-2	205	N/A	Lanett
Louis Watson	CB	5-10	165	4.47	Mobile (St. Paul's)
Coley White	QB	6-1	170	N/A	Daphne
Marsellos Wilder	WR	6-2	190	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
Rodriguez Wilks	WR	6-1	196	4.56	Smyrna, Tenn.
Branden Williams	S	5-10	185	4.55	Phenix City (Russell County)
DeMario Williams	WR	6-3	182	4.55	Columbia, Tenn. (Central)
Jeremy Williams	QB	6-0	200	N/A	Tuscaloosa (Central)
*Michael Williams	DE	6-6	240	4.7	Reform (Pickens County)
Jamie Womack	LB	6-1	210	N/A	Ozark (Carroll)
Lemarcus Wright	WR	6-2	210	N/A	Lanett

Committed to Alabama

Where Are They Now?

At 81, Harry Gilmer still raising eyebrows



Harry Gilmer (right) was a star player for Coach Frank Thomas

University of Alabama

It has been 60 years since a crimson-clad Harry Gilmer wowed spectators with some amazing feats of athleticism. In a way, he's still at it today.

One of Alabama's all-time best football players and certainly one of its most physically gifted underwent knee replacement surgery in late May. When he left the hospital he wasn't in a wheelchair and he wasn't on crutches. He was walking.

"People were asking, 'How can you walk out of the hospital when you just had knee replacement surgery?'" the 81-year-old Gilmer said. "Well, you do what you want to do. I might be playing golf soon. I thought I'd be playing a lot of golf once I retired, but all the walking and getting in and out of the cart was tough on a bad knee.

"I'm a little sore from all the therapy, but other than that I'm doing well. I ought to be able to walk a little better with a straight leg instead of a crooked leg."

"Gimpy" would have been the last word to describe No. 52 in the mid-1940s. Lining up as a left halfback in Coach Frank Thomas' Notre Dame box offense, Gilmer was a dual threat as both a runner and passer. The 5-foot-11, 165-pounder was equally dangerous as a punt returner, kick returner and ball-hawking defensive back. Call him the David Palmer of the 1940s--only better, at least according to Sports Illustrated, which in 2006 named an all-time Alabama team and chose Gilmer over Palmer as the punt returner. The magazine also named Gilmer as the school's all-time best kick returner and one of the Tide's three all-time best running backs, along with Shaun Alexander and Johnny Musso.

Gilmer's name can be found scattered throughout the Alabama record book. He accounted for a school-record 52 touchdowns during his four-year career--29 passing, 19 rushing, two punt returns, one kickoff return and one interception return. He owns Alabama records for punt return yards in a game (122), season (436) and career (1,119) and his career kick return average of 28.7 yards is also a school best, while his 16 career interceptions ranks second in school history. He led the Tide in passing, rushing, interceptions, punt returns and kickoff returns in 1946, and his 11.8 yards-per-punt-return average that season was tops in the nation. Gilmer is the only Alabama player ever to finish in the top five in the Heisman Trophy balloting twice--in 1945 and 1947. He was a first-team All-America selection in 1945 and a second-team choice in '47.

One of Gilmer's more memorable games came against Kentucky when in just one quarter of action he racked up 216 rushing yards on only six carries and was 2-of-2 passing for 50 yards. He was named SEC Player of the Year in 1945 after leading the Tide to a 9-0 Rose Bowl win over Southern Cal. A year earlier he nearly led the Tide to a monumental upset of three-touchdown favorite Duke in the '45 Sugar Bowl.

Following that 29-26 loss to Duke, legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice called Gilmer the best passer he had ever seen.

"In my opinion, that was a bad statement, because I'd be the last one to think it's true," the ever-humble Gilmer said.

Rice, though, hasn't been the only one over the years to think the Birmingham native was indeed something special. Gilmer was inducted into the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame in 1973 and the College Football Hall of Fame in 1993. He was also selected to Alabama's Team of the Century as a defensive back.

"I'm flattered by all the honors I've received, but I hardly knew I deserved all that," Gilmer said. "Everything that could have worked out good for me did."

Who knows how things would have worked out for Gilmer had he gone to Auburn or had he not even played football at all--two very real possibilities. Gilmer's mother, worried about her son's health and safety, didn't fully support her son's decision to play the rough sport until Gilmer's high school coach, Malcolm Laney, convinced her that Gilmer could get his college education paid for through football.

"She learned to like football in a hurry," Gilmer laughed.

When Laney took an assistant coaching job on Thomas' staff, it seemed a lock that Gilmer, who played at Woodlawn High School in Birmingham, would make the short trip to Tuscaloosa and follow his head coach to The University of Alabama.

But it wasn't quite so simple.

"I had sort of made up my mind that I was going to go to Auburn," Gilmer said, "but my mom said, 'No, you're not. You're going to go where Coach Laney can look after you.' Well, mothers know best. I certainly am satisfied with the way things turned out with me going to Alabama."

One of the things Gilmer brought with him to Alabama was his unorthodox passing technique. When rolling out of the pocket, Gilmer

would leap into the air to pass, similar to shooting a jump shot in basketball, only he was throwing a football. Gilmer said it was simply a more natural motion for him than stopping in mid-stride to throw with both feet planted on the ground.

"As I jumped, I went up and turned my hips around and faced the direction I was throwing," he said. "I released the ball right at the peak of my jump. I felt like that if I stayed on the ground I would get hit right after I threw the ball. So it was also a safety precaution for me, but it didn't affect my accuracy. But I only jumped when I was throwing on the run. I didn't stay in the pocket and jump. That would have been stupid."

Gilmer wasn't the first player to make regular use of the jump pass, but he was perhaps the most well known. Others did it before him, including another Woodlawn player named L.A. Gilmer, whom Harry Gilmer said was no relation. As far as some sort of jump pass craze, there was little of that. Coaches, feeling Gilmer was more the exception than the rule, advised their players not to try to imitate the All-America's throwing style. For Gilmer, though, it worked.

Another thing that fell into place for Gilmer and his career at Alabama was the chance he and others had to play as true freshmen in 1944. Alabama didn't field a team in 1943 because of World War II, and due to the lack of numbers, freshmen were afforded the opportunity to contribute on the varsity team in '44. Thomas referred to that year's squad as his "War Babies." Players went both ways during that time, too, giving a multi-talented star like Gilmer the chance to shine on both offense and defense.

"Those times were unusual," he said. "It's hard for people to realize how different it was back then. I played at the right time."

Playing for a championship-winning coach like Frank Thomas was yet another plus. A former pupil of famed Notre Dame Coach Knute Rockne, Thomas had already guided the Tide to two national titles prior to Gilmer's arrival on campus.

"He was a great coach," Gilmer said of Thomas, whose failing health forced him to step down after Gilmer's junior season. He was replaced by Harold "Red" Drew.

The man viewed as Alabama's all-time greatest coach, Paul Bryant, played for Thomas from 1933 to 1935 and became a friend of Gilmer's.

"I knew Coach Bryant because he would come by and see Coach Thomas," Gilmer said. "I would talk with him and visit with him. He was coaching Kentucky at the time. So I knew Coach Bryant and knew him well."

Following his time at Alabama, Gilmer spent nine seasons in the NFL backing up two legendary quarterbacks, Sammy Baugh of the Washington Redskins for seven years and Bobby Lane of the Detroit Lions for two years.

After that came a 23-year career as an NFL coach, including two years as the head coach of the Detroit Lions, followed by 11 years as an NFL scout for the St. Louis and then Phoenix Cardinals.

"I spent 43 years working in the NFL," Gilmer said. "I lived an ideal life doing exactly what I like doing."

After his last NFL stint in St. Louis, Harry and his wife, Katherine, decided to put down roots. Two of their children were living in St. Louis at the time with the other two living in Detroit and Atlanta.

"I had always thought I'd move back to Tuscaloosa when it came time to do it, but my wife asked, 'Why would we go back when we have family here in St. Louis?'" Gilmer said. "So that's why we stayed."

Gilmer does make it back to Tuscaloosa to visit, usually once or twice a year.

"I like to come by Bryant Museum and talk with Coach Clem Gryska, who's a good friend," Gilmer said. "I would have enjoyed living there, but it just didn't work out that way."

His wife, Katherine, died in November 2005. The couple had been married for 61 years.

"We had a wonderful married life together," Gilmer said. "This home I own is awfully big and quiet without her. I sure miss her. I met her when I was 16 in high school at Woodlawn. I saw her walking across the street while I was hitch-hiking after practice, and I said, 'Lookey there at that pretty girl. That's the one for me.' We married at the end of my first year at Alabama."

Gilmer doesn't live completely alone. His ranch style estate in suburban St. Louis is also home to a slew of animals, including a peacock, turkey, goat, chickens, two horses and a pony.

"It's an ideal place for little kids," said Gilmer, who obviously still has some Alabama country boy still left in him. "They'll pass by and beg their moms to stop so they can see the animals. My grandchildren love the animals, too."

In St. Louis, miles and miles from his home state, Gilmer's collection of animals, not his Hall of Fame collegiate football career, is what draws the interest of most locals.

"I'm up here and not everyone knows I'm a former Alabama football player," he said. "Plus, I'm awfully skinny right now. If someone heard I was a former football player, they'd think I wasn't big enough to have played."

History, of course, tells a different story.

So does the Crimson Tide legend ever wish he could go back and relive his glory days playing football for Alabama in the '40s?

In short, no.

"I've done that," he said. "I enjoyed it all and took it all in stride. My bad knee may have been one of the consequences from those days. But if that's the worst thing to happen to me because of football, it was worth it."

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Harry Gilmer is one of 62 former Alabama football players who tells his story of "What It Means To Be Crimson Tide," with foreword by Gene Stallings. 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair is author of the book, which is available for $27.95 plus tax (if applicable) and shipping and handling by calling (205) 345-5074. Autograph by Kirk McNair is available. ■

Harry Gilmer was famous for his accurate jump passes

University of Alabama

SPORTSNOTES BY 'BAMA STAFF

'BAMA Scorecard

Notebooking Crimson Tide Sports

WHAT I DID...

Mark Harrell, an upcoming senior Alabama golfer, had quite a summer on the national stage.

In 2006, Harrell finished second in stroke play at the United States Amateur. This summer he bettered that finish in another major amateur event. Harrell, finished first in stroke play at the U.S. Amateur Public Links at Cantigny Golf Club in Wheaton, Illinois.

The Hazlehurst, Georgia, native finished five-under par in the two rounds of stroke play to best the field of 155. He shot 69-70-139 to win the medal by two strokes. In his second round of stroke play Harrell made the turn at two-over and birdied four holes on the back nine.

Unfortunately, Harrell didn't make it past the first round of match play, falling 3-2 to Andy Roberts.

"It was a lot of fun," said Harrell of winning the stroke play, "I guess winning is winning. It was nice to come out on top in stroke play but the real tournament didn't start until the match play. I'm a little frustrated. I wish I'd have played a little better. But winning the stroke play was fun. It's gave me a lot of confidence, but I just kind of got myself in a hole in match play and couldn't get out."

Harrell was to play in the Southern Amateur at Pinehurst, North Carolina, and in the U.S. Amateur, which he qualified for with his play in the United States Open. He has previously played in two U.S. Amateur events.

The good news is that Harrell was the top amateur in the U.S. Open at Oakmont, Pennsylvania in mid-June. The bad news is he joined one of the world's greatest players, Phil Mickelson, in missing the cut by one stroke. Harrell shot 75-76-151. Mickelson, ranked second in the world, shot 74-77-151. It was the first time in 30 tournaments Mickelson has not made the cut on the tour. It would have been the first time Harrell, playing as an amateur, would have made the cut in a major.

PAN AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS

Basketball was invented in America, but it has been a long time since Americans have dominated in international competition. In fact, the United States team has not won the gold medal in the Pan American Games since 1983.

If the Americans can get the job done in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, this year (July 25-29), it will be in part because of a Crimson Tide influence. Just how much Alabama basketball would impact the team depended on tryouts.

One sure member of the US team is Bama Coach Mark Gottfried, who was chosen as one of two assistant coaches to Villanova's Jay Wright.

Of the 32 amateur players selected for tryouts for the team there were two from Alabama. Upcoming junior forwards Richard Hendrix and Alonzo Gee were invited to try out for the team.

Invitations for the Team Trials were made by the USA Basketball Men's Collegiate Committee, chaired by Syracuse Coach Jim Boeheim.

Twenty-five universities had players in the trials, with Marquette featuring three. Alabama is one of five schools that have two, in addition to Duke, Kansas, Oregon and Washington State. Tennessee junior Chris Lofton, Vanderbilt junior Shan Foster and LSU sophomore Tasmin Mitchell are the only other players from SEC schools.

"I hope it says something good nationally about our program," Gottfried said. "Both of our guys are very deserving to be in this field of 32 players and I think it says good things about our program."

Neither Gee or Hendrix made Team USA to advance to compete in Brazil. In May, Alabama sophomores Demetrius Jemison and Mikhail Torrance traveled to China as part of Reach USA, a non-denominational sports ministry that toured the country May 12-26.

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

DeMeco Ryans, a former Alabama All-America linebacker now playing for the Houston Texans of the NFL, was named Professional Athlete of the Year by the Alabama Sports Writers Association this year. Ryans led the NFL in solo tackles and was named the league's Defensive Rookie of the Year.

Ryans, a 22-year-old native of Bessemer, becomes the first athlete in the 28-year history of the award to win the amateur honor one year and the pro athlete award the next. Others who have won both awards are multi-sport star Bo Jackson, Atlanta Braves pitcher Tim Hudson, golfer Jerry Pate, NFL Hall of Famer Ozzie Newsome and longtime NFL star Cornelius Bennett.

"It's a huge accomplishment to be called the best athlete in the state of Alabama," Ryans said. "When I got the news, I was pretty excited."

The ASWA award joins a shelf-full of prizes for Ryans, who was the 2005 Lott Award winner, for his athletic and academic achievements at Alabama, and was the 2006 Cotton Bowl MVP.

He finished with 126 solo tackles and his 156 total tackles were the most by a rookie in two decades.

TRAINER INDUCTED

Alabama Associate Head Athletics Trainer Sherry Kimbro has been inducted into the Alabama Athletic Trainers Hall of Fame. Kimbro was inducted at the association's state convention in Destin, Florida, on May 19.

Kimbro is in her 20th year at Alabama, joining the Crimson Tide's staff in September 1987. The Dickson, Tennessee, native started her career as a student trainer at Austin Peay State University where she was graduated with a degree in health and physical education in August 1979. She was a graduate assistant athletic trainer at Austin Peay State from 1979-81, earning her Masters degree in public and community health. Upon graduation, Kimbro was hired as assistant athletic trainer and head women's trainer at the University of Miami. She left there in 1987 to become assistant athletic trainer at Alabama and was elevated to associate in 1994.

At Alabama Kimbro has worked with student-athletes from all of the Crimson Tide's sports. She has also served as an instructor and presenter. Among the major national and international events she has worked are the 1996 Olympics where she was chief trainer for indoor volleyball, the 1991 Pan American Games in Havana, Cuba; the Junior USA vs. Canada Track and Field Championship in 2000, the IAAF World Junior Track and Field Championships in Kingston, Jamaica in 2002; and she traveled to Poland as the trainer for the 2004 Athletes in Action women's basketball touring team.

Kimbro's many offices in her field include serving on the U.S. Olympic Sports Medicine Committee from 1987-91; secretary-treasurer of the Alabama State Association from 1992-96; representing the district and the State of Alabama in the Women Athletic Training Committee since 2003; and the Alabama Athletic Trainers Association, among others.

The 1975 graduate of Dickson County Senior High School has won several awards in her field prior to her induction into the hall of fame. In 1995 she won the Southeast Athletic Trainers' Association's District Award for her service and in 2001 SEATA recognized her again with its College Athletic Trainer Award. She received her 25-year award from SEATA in 2004 and won a National Athletic Trainers'

Association Service Award in 2005.

SEC SPLITS BIG POT

The Southeastern Conference will distribute approximately $122 million to the 12 league institutions in the revenue sharing plan for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, which ends August 31, according to SEC Commissioner Mike Slive.

The $122 million is the highest total ever distributed in SEC history and represents a 5.1 per cent increase from the $116.1 million distributed to the schools in 2005-2006.

The revenue sharing plans include money generated by football television, bowls, the SEC Football Championship, basketball television, the SEC Men's Basketball Tournament and NCAA Championships.

Broken down by categories and rounded off, the $122 million was derived from $48.3 million from football television, $23.7 million from bowls, $13.2 million from the SEC Football Championship, $12.3 million from basketball television, $4.3 million from the SEC Men's Basketball Tournament and $20.2 million from NCAA Championships.

The average amount distributed to each school was $10.17 million. (Alabama was probably in the upper range because of its television participation and bowl game. Florida should have been the leading recipient.)

Not included in the $122 million was $12.5 million retained by the institutions participating in bowls and $720,000 divided among all 12 institutions by the NCAA for academic enhancement.

Other yearly money distributions, since 1980, are as follows: 1980 ($4.1 million); 1981 ($5.57 million); 1982 ($7.24 million); 1983 ($9.53 million); 1984 ($18.4 million); 1985 ($9.34 million); 1986 ($13.1 million); 1987 ($13.56 million); 1988 ($14.34 million); 1989 ($13.85 million); 1990 ($16.3 million); 1991 ($20.6 million); 1992 ($27.7 million); 1993 ($34.34 million); 1994 ($34.36 million); 1995 ($40.3 million); 1996 ($45.5 million); 1997 ($58.9 million); 1998 ($61.2 million); 1999 ($68.5 million); 2000 ($73.2 million); 2001 ($78.1 million); 2002 ($95.7 million); 2003 ($101.9 million); 2004 ($108.8 million); 2005 ($110.7 million); 2006 ($116.1 million) and 2007 ($122.0 million).

EXCELLENT START

Lowe's has presented awards in several sports over the year to outstanding student-athletes who complete the senior year. This year Lowe's began its CLASS Award in baseball, and the inaugural winner is Alabama center fielder Emeel Salem of Mountain Brook. Selected by a nationwide vote of coaches, media and fans, the award is presented to college baseball's outstanding NCAA Division I senior student athlete.

The Lowe's program originally was launched in 2001 with basketball. An acronym for Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School, the Lowe's Senior CLASS Award has grown into the nation's premier tribute to college seniors.

The award identifies personal qualities that define a complete student athlete, with criteria including excellence in the classroom, character and community, as well as competition in sports.

"This is truly an honor for me," said Salem, a two-time Academic All-America. "To win such a prestigious award is very humbling. I have always taken my school work and off-the-field matters very seriously. I am truly honored."

On the field, Salem produced a .351 batting average as a senior to earn First Team All-Southeastern Conference honors. He finished his career with 142 consecutive starts in center field and set all-time Alabama career records for stolen bases (76) and triples (13).

In the classroom, he double-majored in Marketing and Spanish, carrying a 3.85 GPA.

Salem received the 2007 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award, the highest honor the University of Alabama offers.He was a recipient of the 2007 H. Boyd McWhorter Southeastern Conference Male Scholar-Athlete Award and has twice been named the SEC Baseball Scholar-Athlete of the Year. He is an eight-time member of both the UA President's List and the UA Dean's List. In all, Salem has earned more than $20,000 in post-graduate scholarships this year, believed to be the most by an student-athlete in school history.

TIDE FINISHES NINTH

The Alabama softball team extended its streak to 32 straight weeks ranked in the top 10 as the Crimson Tide was ninth in the nation in the final USA Today/NFCA Top-25.

Bama was in the top 10 for all 15 weeks of the 2007 season, including the preseason rankings. The Tide has been ranked in 76 consecutive polls and were listed among the five best teams in all 13 regular season polls this past season, including achieving the school's first ever number one ranking on May 2.

Alabama ended its season with a 55-10 record after losing two games at Washington in the NCAA Super Regionals. It was the third straight year the Tide won the regional championship and fifth time in school history. They faced elimination in four NCAA Regional games and battled back to win all four for the title. The Tide started the season 25-0 and reached number two in the rankings, a spot held for six weeks.

National champion Arizona was the number one team at the end of the year after defeating Tennessee in the Women's College World Series to finish 50-14-1. The eight WCWS participants were all listed in the top eight to end the year with Alabama the highest ranked team not to advance.

OUTSTANDING

A pair of former Alabama pitchers turned in solid outings in professional all-star games this summer.

Wade LeBlanc, a second-round pick by the San Diego Padres in 2006, was the starting pitcher for the California League in the 11th annual

California-Carolina League All-Star Game at Banner Island Ballpark in Stockton, California

David Robertson, who was taken in the 18th round last season by the New York Yankees, showed why he is one of the top relief pitchers in the South Atlantic League with a scoreless inning in the annual SAL All-Star Game at State Mutual Stadium in Rome, Georgia.

LeBlanc was the starting pitcher for the California League All-Stars and struck out two batters in his lone inning of work to earn "Pitcher of the Game" honors.

Robertson pitched a scoreless third inning for the South All-Stars in the annual SAL All-Star Game on Tuesday, with one strikeout.

SUMMER LEAGUE PLAY

Alabama baseball players got to see different parts of the country in very competitive baseball leagues. Ten Crimson Tide players participated in five different summer collegiate leagues across the country.

Bama players participated in the Cape Cod League, New England Collegiate Baseball League (NECBL), Valley League, Texas Collegiate and the Hawaiian Collegiate League.

Sophomore third baseman/designated hitter Alex Avila (Junior, Pembroke Pines, Florida) and sophomore left-hander Miers Quigley (Roswell, Georgia) were together in the Cape Cod League. The Crimson Tide duo were teammates for the Harwich Mariners.

Five Crimson Tide players went to the NECBL to play for two different teams. Freshman third baseman Jake Smith (Shannon), freshman pitcher Austin Graham (Hoover) and freshman outfielder/left-hand pitcher Del Howell (Tuscaloosa) were teammates for the Concord (New Hampshire) Quarry Dogs. Freshman second baseman Brandon May (Marietta, Georgia) and junior left-hander Will Stroup (Birmingham) are both with the Newport (Rhode Island) Gulls.

Sophomore outfielder Tyler Odle (Vestavia Hills) played for the Front Royal (Virginia) Cardinals in the Valley League.

Sophomore second baseman Jeff Texada (New Iberia, Louisiana) was back in the Texas Collegiate League for the second straight year with the McKinney Marshalls. Texada helped the Marshalls to the 2006 TCL Championship last summer.

Sophomore infielder/catcher Kyle Moore (Wetumpka) spent his summer on the island of Oahu in Hawaii as he played for the Oahu Peddlers in the Hawaiian Collegiate Summer League.

NO PROBLEM

Kimberly Laing, an upcoming sophomore for the Alabama women's track and field team, won the 100 meter hurdles at the Jamaican Junior National Championships in Kingston, Jamaica, in early July. Laing, a native of Saint Catharine, Jamaica, took first place by nearly half a second with her winning time of 13.67, which was also a new personal record for her.

"To win a junior national championship is a phenomenal accomplishment," Alabama Coach Sandy Fowler said. "It is very difficult when you go home over the summer to train and show the dedication that it takes to compete at that level on your own without teammates and coaches pushing you."

Her first place finish earned her an automatic spot on the Jamaican National Team. As a member of team Jamaica she competed at the Junior Pan Am Championships in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

PLAY ON

Life in softball continues for former Alabama standout Kelly Kretschman. This summer she played with the USA Softball Women's National Team. She was one of 17 players named to the squad following the Women's National Team selection camp in which 35 of the nation's top female softball players competed for a spot on the team. She joins two others as newcomers to the National Team in 2007. Of the 17 players selected, 14 were members of last summer's World Cup and World Championship gold medal team.

Summer events include the Canada Cup in Surrey, British Columbia; the KFC World Cup in Oklahoma City; and the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Kretschman, a four-time All-America for the Crimson Tide, was one of 22 members of the National Training Team selected in September, 2006. She has competed for the U.S. the past three seasons, capturing a gold medal in 2004 with the U.S. Olympic team. Last season she helped lead the team to the Japan Cup Championship with a 2-for-3 performance and two RBI in a 7-0 championship game win.

University of Arizona Head Coach Mike Candrea will head the coaching staff of the 2007 USA squad. Former Alabama assistant coach Karen Johns, now at the University of Virginia, is one of three assistant coaches on staff.

WORK AND PLAY

Joseph Sykora, a Daphne native who will be a senior on the Alabama golf team this fall, has been named to the Cleveland Golf All-America Scholars team for Division I by the Golf Coaches Association of American.

Sykora is a 4.0 student who graduated from The University in May with an accounting degree. He will start graduate school at Alabama in the fall as he finishes out his playing eligibility in his final season with the Crimson Tide golf team. Sykora, a 2005 U.S. Amateur participant and a key golfer on Alabama's team that spent from September through February ranked number one in the nation, was named the Southeastern Conference Scholar Athlete of the Year for men's golf in both 2006 and 2007. He is a two-time ESPN Academic All-America. He won the individual championship at the Jerry Pate National Intercollegiate last fall, setting Alabama individual 54-hole record at 199 to win.

The SEC announced that six Tide men's golfers are among the 2007 SEC Spring Academic Honor Roll award winners. Sykora is among them. The others are Mark Harrell (management), Matt Hughes (marketing), Matthew Swan (communication studies), Michael Thompson (accounting) and Stewart Whitt (finance).

Alabama women's track and field stars Aymara Albury and Kimberly Laing were selected to the United States track and field and cross country coaches association All-Academic team for the 2007 season.

To qualify for the USTFCCCA All-Academic Track and Field Team, one must have a cumulative grade-point average of 3.25 and obtain an NCAA automatic or provisional qualifying mark for the most recent indoor championships or an outdoor regional qualifying mark in their respective event.

Albury is an outgoing senior who only competed in the indoor season for the Tide this year with a 3.63 GPA as a chemistry major.

In her four years at The Capstone Albury was an two time SEC Champion in the shot put, six time NCAA national qualifier and she holds the school record in the shot put with a distance of 56-06.25.

Laing is a freshman sprinter for the Tide with a 3.5 GPA in international studies.

NUMBER ONE

Alabama was a big winner at the national association convention of college sports publications in Las Vegas in awards presentations this summer. It should come as no surprise that Alabama is a heavy hitter in the national collegiate picture. But 'BAMA had considerable competition among the publications and websites for recognition at the Scout.com annual convention and workshop in Las Vegas.

'BAMA Magazine won two of the most prestigious honors at the awards ceremony.

The 2006 'BAMA Football Yearbook was named best of the year.

And more of a tribute to Alabama fans than to anything else, 'BAMA was honored for having the biggest growth among publications in college, NFL football, and major league baseball. ■

RECRUITING BY KIRK McNAIR

The Other Guys

Football isn't the only sport busy adding athletes

Kathleen Ekey

Furman University

No one would suggest that summer is the busy time for recruiting news. It's not that recruiting doesn't take place. There are camps in which prospects are on campus and there are evaluation opportunities in some sports. Alabama football has had a handful of public commitments, and it is likely that coaches in other less high-profile sports also have future signees lined up.

There were some commitments to the Crimson Tide in basketball-men's and women's who will sign in November-and a couple of signees in spring sports, one of them a high-profile transfer.

Dave Telep, national basketball recruiting expert for Scout.com, broke the story this summer of one of the top wings in the Class of 2008 picking Bama.

Telep wrote, "The Alabama Crimson Tide scored, in the opinion of Scout.com, a significant recruit from the Class of 2008. Tony Mitchell, a 6-6 wing man out of Swainsboro (Georgia) High picked Mark Gottfried's program over South Carolina and Cincinnati."

"It's true, he's committed," Hoop Planet AAU Coach James Clark told Scout.com. "He was with his high school coach this weekend and I just got off the phone with them. His coach said a lot of people were calling and he wanted to focus in on his academics and get it all straight on his end."

One of the top scorers (13.3 ppg.) at the recent NBA Players Association Camp, Mitchell is likely to improve upon his pre-summer ranking of number 67. A terrific athlete with size and range, Clark sees big things for Mitchell early on in Tuscaloosa.

"He's going to make a big impact. We've been playing him at the two guard to build his confidence.

"He's a jump shooter but it's hard to say because he's a great jumper too. He's got a good vertical and he shoots it well. This kid can put the ball in the hole. The kid can shoot the ball."

Coach Stephany Smith's Crimson Tide women's program needs help. Bama was 10-20 last year, losing its last 15 Southeastern Conference games in Smith's second season.

Smith didn't have to go far to get a nice commitment this summer. Ericka Russell, a 5-8 guard for Coach Lytrice Washington at Tuscaloosa Northview, announced for Bama following her team's participation in Smith's summer camp.

The upcoming senior was a starter as a freshman until a knee injury. Last year she averaged 17.1 points, 6.8 rebounds, 4.7 assists, and 4.5 steals per game. She scored 33 points against Auburn and 30 against Homewood. She is the first Northridge player to score 500 points in a season and 1,000 in a career.

Alabama Women's Golf Coach Mic Potter is getting some instant help, but he earned it a few years ago. Potter came to Alabama two years ago after having coached at Furman for 23 seasons. A former Lady Paladin is transferring to Bama to begin play for the Crimson Tide this fall.

Kathleen Ekey, a junior from Wadsworth, Ohio, the 2005-06 Southern Conference Freshman of the Year, played two seasons at Furman before deciding to make the move to Alabama to play for Potter, who recruited her to Furman before he accepted the position with the Tide.

"I recruited Kathleen while I was still the coach at Furman, and believed at that time that she had as much potential as any player that I had ever signed," Potter said. "Her two-year college career has proven that she is on the verge of becoming one of the best players in the country. She is a tremendous young lady and a great fit for our program."

Last season as a sophomore, Ekey lost a heartbreaking decision after a bid to win the NCAA East Regional individual title, where Furman placed 11th in the team standings. She was named to the NGCA All-Region team and earned Southern Conference Player of the Month honors in May. Ekey had six top-10 finishes on the season.

Ekey was first team All-Southern Conference as a freshman for the Lady Paladins after posting a 75.24 stroke average and recording six rounds of even-par or better.

Ekey was one of the top preps in the state of Ohio, leading Walsh Jesuit to two state titles in 2001 and 2004. She was the individual medalist in the 2004 state tournament and was a four time Individual Section Champion. Ekey won the 2005 USGA Women's Amateur Qualifier in Cincinnati and competed in the 2003 and 2004 USGA Girls' Amateur events.

A high school Academic All-American as a senior, Ekey was also a member of the National Honor Society of her high school and of the Dulles Chapter of the organization. A member of the Phi Eta Sigma honor society at Furman, Ekey plans to major in communications at Alabama.

Women's Tennis Coach Jenny Mainz added a late signee when Tiffany Welcher signed with Alabama in late spring.

In her four years at Clarksville (Indiana) High School she made two appearances in the state singles championship match, taking the title in 2006. She also captured the 2007 state doubles title with her sister as her partner and became the first female in Indiana history to win a singles and doubles state title. In 2006, Tiffany held the top ranking in Indiana and in the Midwest and won an impressive 121 consecutive matches. Adding to her list of accomplishments, Tiffany was All-America and was nominated for the Wendy's High School Heisman trophy.

Not only an accomplished athlete, she graduated in the top 10 of her class with a 3.938 GPA in AP honors. Tiffany also participated in track, was a member of the math team and has a second degree black belt in Taekwondo.

Alabama softball ranks among the nation's best and there have been a few good local players on Coach Patrick Murphy's team. That number will grow in the 2009 season. Two upcoming prep seniors who have committed to sign with Bama are Olivia Gibson of Tuscaloosa Academy and Jazlyn Lunceford of Tuscaloosa County High School. Gibson is a catcher and third baseman who batted .467 with 70 RBI on her state championship team as a junior. Lunceford, an outfielder and third baseman, batted .399. ■

2007 Alabama Fall Schedules

FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	CT (TV)	SERIES RECORD
September 1	Western	Carolina	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 1-0-0
September 8	Vanderbilt	Nashville	11:30 (LF)	UofA leads 57-19-4
September 15	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	5:45 (ESPN)	UofA leads 10-7-0
September 22	Georgia	Tuscaloosa		UofA leads 35-24-4
September 29	Florida State	Jacksonville		UofA leads 2-0-1
October 6	Houston	Tuscaloosa (Homecoming)		UofA leads 9-0-0
October 13	Mississippi	Oxford		UofA leads 43-9-2
October 20	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa		UofA leads 44-38-7
October 27	Open			
November 3	LSU Tuscaloosa			UofA leads 43-22-5
November 10	Mississippi State	Starkville		Uof A leads 72-16-3
November 17	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa		UofA leads 1-0-0
November 24	Auburn	Auburn		UofA leads 38-32-1
December 1	SEC Championship	Atlanta		2 wins, 3 losses

VOLLEYBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	CT
	@ Oklahoma Invitational	
Aug. 24-25	Oklahoma, Seton Hall, Denver	TBA
	Academy Sports Invitational	
Aug. 31	Illinois State, UAB	
Sept. 2	Sacramento State	TBA
	@ Notre Dame Invitational	
Sept. 7-8	Charleston, Ohio, Notre Dame	TBA
Sept. 14	@ Tennessee	6:00
Sept. 16	@ Kentucky	12:30
Sept. 19	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Sept. 23	Arkansas	1:30
Sept. 28	South Carolina	7:00
Sept. 30	Florida	7:00
Oct. 5	@ LSU	7:00
Oct. 7	@ Ole Miss	1:30
Oct. 12	@ Auburn	7:00
Oct. 14	Georgia	1:30
Oct. 19	Kentucky	7:00
Oct. 21	Tennessee	1:30
Oct. 24	Mississippi State	7:00
Oct. 26	@ Arkansas	7:00
Nov. 2	@ Georgia	7:00
Nov. 4	Auburn	1:30
Nov. 9	Ole Miss	7:00
Nov. 11	LSU	1:30
Nov. 16	@ Florida	6:00
Nov. 18	@ South Carolina	12:30

SOCCER

DATE	OPPONENT	CT
Aug. 31	@ Robert Morris	4:00
Sept. 2	@ Duquesne	Noon
Sept. 7	Kennesaw State	7:00
Sept. 9	@ Mercer	3:00
Sept. 14	MTSU	7:00
Sept. 16	Memphis	1:00
Sept. 19	Alabama State	7:00
Sept. 23	Mississippi Valley	1:00
Sept. 28	Vanderbilt	7:00
Sept. 30	Kentucky	1:00
Oct. 5	@ Mississippi State	7:00
Oct. 7	@ Ole Miss	2:00
Oct. 12	Arkansas	7:00
Oct. 14	LSU	1:00
Oct. 19	@ South Carolina	6:00
Oct. 21	@ Florida	1:30
Oct. 25	Tennessee	7:00
Oct. 28	@ Georgia	1:00
Nov. 2	Auburn	7:00
Nov. 6	SEC Tournament	TBD
Nov. 19	NCAA Tournament	TBD

WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	OPPONENT
Aug. 31	Belmont Opener @ Nashville
Sept. 14	Crimson Classic
Sept. 29	Loyola Lakefront @ Chicago
Oct. 13	Chile Pepper @ Fayetteville, Ark.
Oct. 27	SEC Championship @ Lexington, Ky.
Nov. 10	NCAA Regional @ Gainesville, Fla.
Nov. 19	NCAA Championship @ Terre Haute, Ind.

MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	OPPONENT
Sept. 7	@ UT-Chattanooga Invitational
Sept. 14	Crimson Classic
Sept. 29	Bill Dellinger Invite @ Eugene, Ore.
Oct. 13	Pre-NCAA @ Terre Haute, Ind.
Oct. 27	SEC Championship @ Lexington, Ky.
Nov. 10	NCAA Regional @ Gainesville, Fla.
Nov. 19	NCAA Championship @ Terre Haute, Ind.

U.S. ARMY ALL-AMERICAN BOWL

The U.S. Army All-American Bowl is the premier high school football game in the nation. It features the nation's top 80 high school senior football players in a classic East vs. West gridiron battle.

The U.S. Army All-American Bowl is more than just a game; it is a celebration of high school football. An invitation to participate in the game is the highest honor a high school football player can receive. The Bowl was designed to recognize the nation's leading high school athletes who share the U.S. Army core values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honesty, integrity and personal courage.

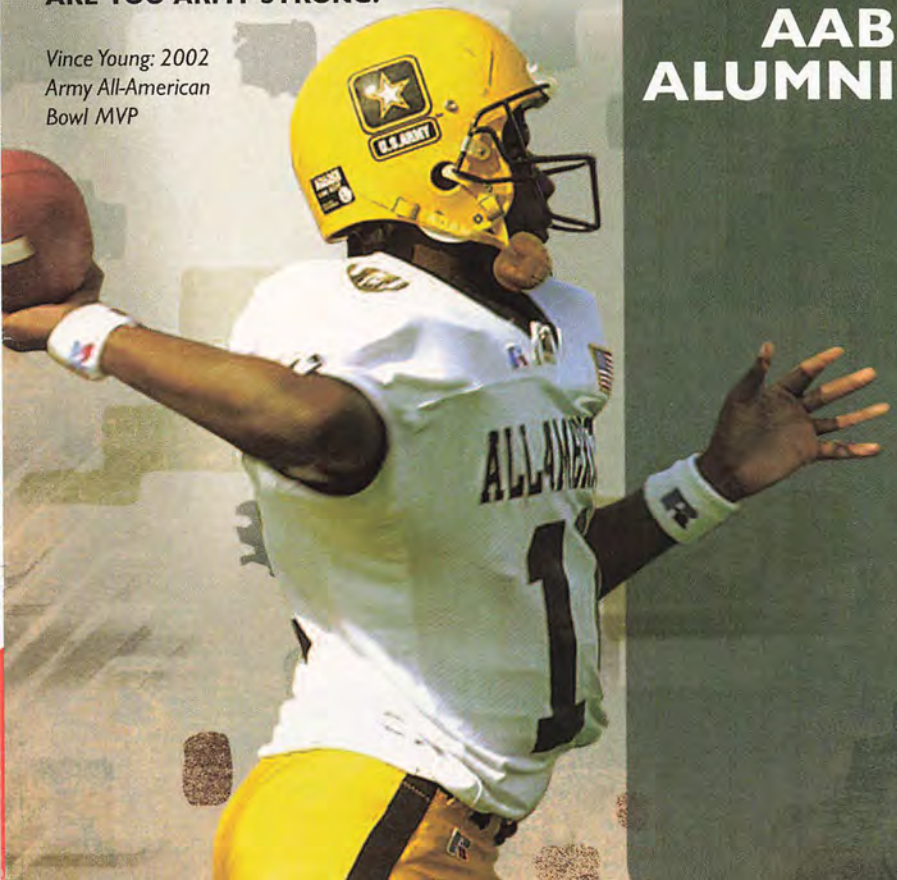
These athletes, much like U.S. Army Soldiers, demonstrate a strength that can only be found in the elite. Not just physical strength; emotional and mental strength.

The strength to:

Always place the mission first.
Never accept defeat.
Never quit.
And never leave a fallen comrade.

THERE'S STRONG. THEN THERE'S ARMY STRONG.

ARE YOU ARMY STRONG?



Vince Young: 2002 Army All-American Bowl MVP

Reggie Bush: 2003 Army All-American Bowl Alumni

WHO A Classic East vs. West showdown featuring the nation's top 80 high school football stars.

WHAT The U.S. Army All-American Bowl features America's future college and NFL stars. The Bowl has many alumni currently playing in the NFL and starring at the collegiate level.

WHERE Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas.

WHEN Saturday, January 5, 2008, 12:00 pm CST, Live on NBC.

WHY The U.S. Army is proud to provide a national platform for fine, young student-athletes. These athletes demonstrate some of the key qualities exhibited within the Army, which include leadership, teamwork, commitment to excellence and a desire to make a difference as members of their teams.

AAB ALUMNI Reggie Bush, RB, New Orleans Saints; Vince Young, QB, Tennessee Titans; Vernon Davis, TE, San Francisco 49ers; Donte Whitner, DB, Buffalo Bills; Haloti Ngata, DL, Baltimore Ravens; LenDale White, RB, Tennessee Titans; Kamerion Wimbley, DL, Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Nick Mangold, OL, New York Jets; Tommie Harris, DT, Chicago Bears; Kevin Jones, RB, Detroit Lions; Michael Clayton, WR, Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Derrick Johnson, LB, KC Chiefs; Marlin Jackson, DB, Indianapolis Colts; Marcus Spears, DE, Dallas Cowboys, Joe Thomas, OL, Cleveland Browns; Adrian Peterson, RB, Minnesota Vikings; Ted Ginn, Jr., WR, Miami Dolphins; Brady Quinn, QB, Cleveland Browns (To see a complete list of NFL Alumni visit www.usarmyallamericanbowl.com.)

For more information on attending the All-American Bowl visit www.usarmyallamericanbowl.com and for more information on the Army visit www.goarmy.com.

U.S.ARMY

ARMY STRONG.

U.S. ARMY ALL-AMERICAN BOWL

BANKSTON
MOTOR HOMES, INC.
Huntsville, AL
Atlanta, GA-Nashville, TN
www.BankstonMotorHomes.com

Bankston Motor Homes

For over 36 years Bankston Motor Homes has delivered the highest quality motor homes and travel trailers to RVers all over the nation. We are proud to be the top dealer of Tiffin Motor Homes in the country.

Phaeton

Allegro Bay

Allegro Bus

Allegro

Zephyr

Since 1970
Bankston Motor Homes has delivered the highest quality motor homes and travel trailers to RVers all over the nation. We are proud to be the top dealer of Tiffin Motor Homes in the country. Call or visit us today!

www.BankstonMotorHomes.com | 1-888-477-0455

Huntsville, AL - Nashville, TN - Atlanta, GA
Montgomery, AL - Florence, AL